A MODERN PILGRIM IN MECCA

A. J. B. WAVELL

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A MODERN PILGRIM IN MECCA

AND

A SIEGE IN SANAA

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THE AUTHOR.
DAMASCUS, 1908.

A MODERN PILGRIM IN MECCA

AND A SIEGE IN SANAA

BY

A. J. B. WAVELL, F.R.G.S.

ILLUSTRATED

LONDON
CONSTABLE & COMPANY LTD
1912

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PREFACE

This book breaks no new ground. European travellers have before now given better and fuller accounts of the places it describes. Still the journey to Mecca and Medina is perhaps an experience sufficiently out of the common to be worth recounting; especially as a good many years have gone by since the last Englishman to intrude himself into those places told the story of his adventures.

I have less deference in writing about the Yemen. The events in that country are worthy of a chapter in the history of these prosaic days. The counter-currents of human interest and activity that run up and down the Red Sea, linking the civilizations of the East and West, leave undisturbed this backwater. Western Europe knows little and cares less about what goes on there.

Yet for the last twenty years, while the Turks and Arabs have been struggling for the mastery, the history of the Yemen has been one of fire and sword. It is a record of battles and sieges, places taken by storm and garrisons starved into surrender; of savage massacres and fierce reprisals. Generals have made and lost great military reputations there. The campaign of 1911, with which this book deals, probably cost nearly as many lives as did the Boer War. Nor is the conflict over; it will be renewed and fought out to the end, for both sides mean to win.

Little more than bare references to these happenings have appeared in the newspapers. No war correspondents go up with the Turkish armies; there are no foreign attachés to tell their countrymen what they see. The Turks are quite satisfied that the world should remain

in ignorance of what is happening; they ask nothing better than to be left alone. It is by virtue of being the only Englishman to witness the fighting in the Yemen that I have ventured to write this account of it.

I cannot claim any scientific value for this work, except in so far as spadework in exploration, as in politics, may have its uses. To some extent it is the record of a failure, but I am not without hopes that the narrative of my own journey may help other travellers to go farther and accomplish more.

In transliterating Arabic words I have not followed any recognized system. It seems to me that it must be more trouble to learn the proper use of the accents and diacritical marks than the Arabic character itself. Therefore, in the case of proper names I have stuck to the conventional spelling, and with other words I have tried to represent the true sound as nearly as can be done with the ordinary letters used in English. The result, I admit, is not satisfactory, and inconsistencies abound. It serves, however, to illustrate the great need for some new convention on the subject. I have done my best to introduce as few Arabic words as possible into the text, and in translating have tried to avoid the irritating trick of putting the Eastern idiom into the English version along with the sense.

I am indebted to Mr. D. G. Hogarth's book, "The Penetration of Arabia," for much of the geographical information, and to Professor D. Margoliouth's "Mohammed," Washington Irving's "Mahomet and His Successors," and several Arab writers, for many of my historical facts.

A. J. B. W.

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A MODERN PILGRIM IN MECCA

INTRODUCTION

Some apology is necessary for beginning a book of this description with a dissertation on the Geography of Arabia, and the tenets of one of the most widely-spread religions of the world ; for the elements of both might well be supposed to be common knowledge. It is my experience, however, that this is not always the case, and since a general comprehension of these matters is essential to any interest the experiences to be related may have, I am devoting some space to their consideration for the benefit of such of my readers as have not found time to study Oriental subjects.

Our ignorance concerning Arabia may be attributed to the scarcity of literature on the subject—more especially of English literature. Nor is this scarcity surprising, when we come to consider the character of the country and its people. Though the peninsula has an area of about a million and a half square miles, that is to say, though it is larger than India south of the fifteenth parallel, it contains at the most five inland cities worthy of the name. These are, in order of importance, Mecca, Medina, Sanaa, Hail and Riadh—the claim of the last two to the title resting merely on the fact that they are the capital towns of settled communities. Yet we can without difficulty enumerate the European visitors to them all. It is moderately certain, in the first place, that no professing Christian has set foot in either Mecca or Medina since the time of the Prophet. The Europeans who are known to have been to Mecca during the past

hundred years number rather more than a dozen,* and of these four, including the writer, have been Englishmen. The visitors to Medina have been fewer still. Travellers to these places have invariably made the journey in one of two ways : either by the public profession of Islam or in disguise. As regards the former, several Western converts to Islam have doubtless made the pilgrimage, and probably many of the European officers in the Egyptian service who had forsworn Christianity found their way there at the time of Mohammed Ali's occupation of the Hedjaz ; none of these, however, would seem to have recorded their experiences.

The first accurate description of Mecca in a European language was by "Ali Bey," a Spaniard, in 1807. The more celebrated Swiss traveller Burchardt, who by long residence in the East had come to be considered a genuine Moslem, went there in 1814 and gave us a full and scientific account of his journey. He was followed in 1853 by Sir Richard Burton, who made the pilgrimage disguised as an Indian doctor, and by Keane, another Englishman, in 1877. In 1885 Dr. Hugronge, a Dutchman, spent several months in Mecca, outside the pilgrimage season. His book, the most comprehensive work on the subject we possess, is in German, and has not, unfortunately, been translated. The list of visitors to Sanaa is longer, but they do not probably much exceed a score ; while not more than half-a-dozen Europeans have seen Hail in modern times, and only two have reached Riadh, namely Palgrave in 1863, and Colonel Pelly in 1864.

It will thus be understood why these places, though they have been described, and well described, by Western travellers of several nationalities, remain in a sense unknown to the world at large. Arabia, in spite of its proximity to Europe, is still in great measure unexplored, even in a geographical sense ; and very little news concerning events taking place there, even in the more civilized parts, finds its way into the European press.

The general physical character of the peninsula may

* This is exclusive of European Moslems, such as Albanians and Russians, and also of converts—an uncertain quantity. Nor does it include those that have gone there involuntarily as prisoners, such as the Englishwoman found there by Keane, nor yet some who are believed to have perished there.

be well appreciated by considering it as an oblong plateau, tilted up at its south-west corner. Meteorological conditions have favoured the disintegration of part of the elevated corner and the spreading of the detritus over the rest of the peninsula. The existence of this high ground likewise causes the premature precipitation of the moisture brought from the Indian Ocean by the south-west monsoon, with the result that the interior is nearly rainless. There is only one true mountain-range—so far as we know—the Gebel Akhdar in Oman. The mountainous country in the south-west is merely the broken edge of the plateau. The main water-courses, which trend as a rule north-east to the Persian Gulf, are merely torrent beds containing no perennial water above ground; though in many of them sufficient water can be obtained by sinking wells to maintain a more or less settled population along their course.

As might be expected, given such conditions, much of the country is desert. There are in fact several kinds of desert in Arabia, varying in degree of aridity. The plains of the Nafud, for instance, through absence of water support no settled population, but are yet by no means sterile, and afford grazing for flocks and herds throughout part of the year. There are deserts of lava, and mountainous deserts, and finally the "empty quarter," as the Arabs call it, which occupies the whole of the south central region. Concerning this last we know little or nothing; it is quite unexplored, and even Arab geographers are silent concerning it. On these grounds it is assumed to be an impenetrable wilderness of sand; but mountains, lakes, or even cities may exist there for all we know to the contrary. It is eight hundred miles across, so such speculations are permissible, even while admitting their improbability.

The deserts of Arabia are interspersed with tracts of country where more favourable conditions prevail, which are capable of supporting nomad, and, more rarely, settled communities. The elevated south-west corner is well watered and generally fertile. The great valley of Hadramout, which proceeds from it and discharges into the Arabian Sea, is in its upper reaches fairly densely populated. The valleys that drain towards the Gulf

are inhabited at intervals. Except in the great southern desert oases are not uncommon.

The western borderlands and Oman are the most favoured parts of Arabia in the all-important matter of rainfall. The former in the south obtain all they require, but farther north, as the altitude diminishes, the country rapidly becomes sterile. There is little fertility in Hedjaz beyond a few oases, such as that of Taif, and Medina. Oman owes its comparatively abundant water-supply to a lofty mountain-range, composed of intrusive igneous rocks, and with this exception the south and east coasts are dry and barren.

To turn from the physical to the political geography of the peninsula, we note that the countries adjoining the coast are administered or "protected" by European Powers, and that the central communities remain independent. The whole of the Red Sea coast, together with its hinterland, is comprised in the three Ottoman provinces of Hedjaz, Asir, and Yemen. Great Britain holds the Aden peninsula, and protects a small area on the mainland, with certain other towns on the south coast. Muscat is nominally an independent Sultanate where British influence predominates. The Gulf coast is divided between certain so-called "trucial chiefs" who have come to some arrangement with the Government of India, and others, farther north, who acknowledge Turkish suzerainty.

Hail and Riadh are the capitals of the two independent Arab states which divide between them the habitable parts of Central Arabia, known as Negd. Both are principalities, and both profess allegiance to the Wahabi doctrine, which will be explained later. They are constantly at war with each other. The Ottoman Government bases a claim to protect these countries on the Sultan's pretensions to the Caliphate. The idea, however, that the Sultan of Turkey, being "Commander of the Faithful," can thereby claim the allegiance of all true Moslems, is as likely to find acceptance in India or Persia as in any part of Negd.

The inhabitants of the peninsula belong to a Semitic race—that is to say, they are of the same family ethnologically as the Jews, whom in many respects they closely resemble.

An Arab author writes of them, "Nothing is more obscure than the early history of this race ; but they are classified in three divisions : the Baidah, the Ariba, and the Mustariba. The Baidah (the perished) are those of extreme antiquity, concerning whom little is known to us. Such, for instance, were Aad, Thamoud, and the first Jurham. As for the Ariba, or true Arabs, they are the people of the Yemen, the children of Kahtan ; while the Mustariba, or Arabs by adoption, are the sons of Ishmael, the son of Abraham, who, as it is said, came in contact with the second Jurham of the race of Kahtan, and married into that tribe. His descendants are called Arabs by adoption, because Ishmael was a Hebrew by birth and in language. From the Ariba and Mustariba originated the Arab tribes as known at the present day."

Kahtan (or Jocktan) was the son of Abeis, the son of Shalah, the son of Arfakhshad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah. He is said to have been the first to speak the Arabic language.

Arabic and Hebrew are nearly allied, and are the only living representatives of the linguistic group to which Chaldæan, Syriac, and many other dead languages belong. The Arabs are distributed in tribes, and are essentially a nomadic people. Physically, they are a handsome race, small and slight in stature, in colour light brown to white. It will be understood that we are speaking here of the nomad tribesmen of Negd and Hedjaz, not of the settled populations found in the south-west and in towns ; nor yet of Egyptians, Moors, Syrians or others, sometimes loosely termed Arabs. The true Arab has sharp aquiline features, straight black hair on his head, and very little on his face. He is generally depicted as a tall, imposing-looking person, of dark complexion, with a flowing beard ; but this is wrong.

These two races, the Arabs and the Jews, so nearly alike as they are physically and intellectually, yet differ widely in certain moral qualities. The Arabs in the past have shown great capacity not only for waging war on a large scale but for administering and civilizing the countries conquered. They made for themselves an empire larger than that of Rome, if somewhat less durable. They have imposed their language and religion on a con-

siderable portion of the world's inhabitants. Withal they have few if any business or commercial aptitudes, and are the reverse of thrifty. In character they are brave, cunning, and somewhat cruel; honest in their own way, and faithful to their word once given. They are renowned for their hospitality and chivalrous protection of strangers.

Such, then, in brief, are the characteristics of the Bedou, that is to say, the true Arabs of the desert. In the settled districts of the peninsula, and among urban populations, these attributes have become much modified by contact with other races. The institution of slavery, with the fact that the offspring of unions contracted with slave women are considered as legitimate, is largely responsible for this. Nearly all the Arabs of Muscat, for example, have a strain of African blood, and it is not uncommon to find individuals claiming descent from the Prophet who are to all appearance pure negroes. In Medina, again, constant intermarriage with Turks, Kurds, and Persians has almost obliterated the original Semitic type, so that the inhabitants are Arabs only in their language and customs. In the Yemen the population has always been settled and devoted to agriculture in contradistinction to the nomad pastoralists we have been discussing. The Persian and Abyssinian invasions of that country have left their mark so far that the people inhabiting it to-day are really Arabs in name only, and have little in common with the Bedou. Their language contains so many foreign words that, apart from its structure, it might sometimes be difficult to recognize its origin.

The history of Arabia prior to the advent of Islam will be alluded to later. Readers will recall that the Queen of Sheba (Saba) came from there. The capital of the Sabæan kingdom, called Marib, was situated not far from the present-day city of Sanaa. The Arabs are accustomed to boast that their country has never submitted to foreign rule. This is in the main true, for though it has been frequently invaded, no foreign occupation of any part of the interior has hitherto been more than temporary. The Roman Emperor Augustus, under the mistaken impression that Arabia was a rich country which

it would be worth while to annex, sent an expedition there under a certain Ælius Gallius which merely succeeded in demonstrating the contrary. This delusion was probably due to the riches which arrived at Arabian ports from the Far East being considered as having come from Arabia itself. The general's description of the country and its people on his return was not of a nature to encourage further enterprises of the sort.

We may conclude that at the beginning of the seventh century Arabia was regarded in official circles at Byzantium in very much the same light as Somaliland is to-day at Whitehall. A nasty, unhealthy country, chiefly remarkable for its extreme sterility, peopled by wandering tribes of equally unpleasant barbarians—it was very much better left alone. None could have guessed what was maturing, or have foreseen that events then taking place in an obscure town there, were destined to culminate in the explosion which overthrew the Roman Empire, and imposed an alien religion and civilization on the greater part of the inhabited world as it was known in those days.

The prophet Mohammed was born in Mecca in the year A.D. 569. The tribe of Koreish, to which his family belonged, was predominant among the clans of that town and considered second to none in Arabia in point of lineage and honourable traditions. His father and mother, however, were people of small means and no particular consequence. Left an orphan at an early age, he was brought up by his uncle, Abu Talib, the keeper of the Meccan shrine, a rich and powerful man of generous disposition. His education, however, was neglected, and unlike his cousin Ali, the son of Abu Talib, he was not taught to read and write. On growing up he made the acquaintance of Khadijah, a rich widow considerably older than himself, who entrusted him with the conduct of a caravan conveying merchandise to Syria, and on his return married him. There is nothing in his history very remarkable so far.

Finding himself thus, at the age of twenty-five, relieved from all necessity of working for his living, Mohammed had leisure to devote himself to politics and subjects of abstract interest. His wife was devoted to him, and for some years he lived with her as happily and

contentedly as other men of easy-going temperament and no particular ambitions, similarly situated, did then and do now. They had one son, Kasim, who died in infancy, and four daughters, of whom Fatima is the most famous.

Mecca was at that time not merely a commercial town of some importance, but the centre of an idolatrous cult widespread throughout Arabia. Pilgrims flocked to the city to visit the celebrated temple known as the Kaaba, which was surrounded by three hundred and sixty idols—one for each day of their year. At a certain time every year there was a sort of fair there, to which many foreign merchants brought their wares. Among them came frequently Jews and Christians, who seem to have been fond of discussing their rival creeds after business hours with any one who cared to argue with them. Mohammed, having plenty of spare time, was fond of these disputations, and no doubt acquired therefrom much of the philosophy and knowledge of the outside world that he afterwards displayed. He also began to give evidence of an emotional temperament and a tendency to asceticism. He would withdraw himself from human society for days at a time in order to meditate apart on some point that had aroused his interest.

At the age of about forty he began to see visions. He may or may not have been subject previously to epileptic seizures. The evidence therefor is not conclusive, and the point is in any case unimportant. These revelations, or hallucinations, as most of my readers will prefer to call them, nearly always took the same form. An angel stood before him and communicated to him passages from a book which he commanded him to proclaim to the whole world. The earlier revelations were in a sort of rhymed prose peculiar to the Arabic language; their force and beauty have seldom been disputed by the most relentless enemies of the religion he formulated.

Mohammed confided these experiences to his wife and sought her advice. She had been, naturally enough, more concerned than impressed by his previous eccentricities.

The visions continued and became ever more insistent. Mohammed allowed himself to be convinced, and enunciated in public the following extraordinary doctrine:

that there was only one God, and that he, Mohammed, was His prophet.

Khadijah, needless to say, was his first convert, and others soon followed, Ali among the earliest. Abu Talib made no objection, and seems for long to have regarded his nephew's latest aberration with tolerant amusement, as likewise did most of the townspeople, with whom Mohammed was rather popular than otherwise.

The new religion, however, began to gain converts in numbers which menaced certain vested interests. Mecca depended for its prosperity on the pilgrims to the shrine, and, obviously, if one of the principal citizens were to be allowed, not only to condemn and ridicule the existing religious system, but to convert others to his views, that prosperity was likely to suffer. Though they were by no means fanatical, it yet certainly behoved the Meccans to keep an eye on their material interests. Such at any rate was the opinion at the time.

In Arabia, when the continued existence of an individual seems to the public to be undesirable, he is generally assassinated. The Meccans, however, were very reluctant to adopt this simple method of dealing with the situation, because it would have involved a blood feud between Mohammed's family, the Benee Hashim, and that to which the assassin happened to belong. The Benee Hashim were a very powerful force at the time, and Abu Talib, who was fond of his nephew, was not a man to fall foul of lightly. Mohammed therefore was allowed to continue his preaching for several years almost unmolested, and it was only when the defection of some of their principal citizens awoke the Meccans to the gravity of the danger, that strong measures were ultimately adopted. In order to minimize the risk of civil war, it was arranged that a representative of every family in Mecca, except the Benee Hashim, should take part in the murder.

Mohammed, however, got wind of the plot and fled to Medina, where he was followed in course of time by most of his disciples. The people of this town, which lies about three hundred miles north of Mecca on the road between that place and Syria, had shown themselves particularly well disposed to receive his teaching. The circumstances of his escape were sensational; and it owed

its success largely to the brave action of Ali, then a youth of about nineteen years of age, who awaited the assassins in the Prophet's place. The miraculous incident of the spider which built its web, and the pigeon its nest, in the mouth of the cave in which Mohammed and his companion, Abu Bakar, were hiding, thus deceiving their pursuers, took place on this occasion. The year of Mohammed's flight to Medina, known as the Hegrah, is the starting-point of the Moslem reckoning of dates. It corresponds to the year A.D. 622.

At Medina Mohammed found himself a poverty-stricken exile, and suffered great hardship for a time. He and his companions were often short of food. He continued none the less to make converts in ever-increasing numbers, and daily gained in influence. A quarrel between him and the Jews led to the expulsion of the latter. The Meccans viewed the growing power of the new sect with great concern, owing to the geographical position of Medina, lying as it did on their main line of communication with Syria. War soon broke out, and the first battle was fought at Badr in the year A.H. 2 (A.D. 624). In this the Moslems were victorious, but they were defeated the following year at Uhud, close to Medina, when nothing but the bad generalship of the Meccan commander saved them from total destruction. Mohammed, on the other hand, displayed remarkable military talent in rapidly reorganizing his dispirited followers and taking the field again the following day. The Meccans neglected to pursue their advantage, and retired. Mohammed's activity and prestige remaining undiminished by this reverse, they returned the following year in greater force. The Prophet, however, had constructed a formidable earthwork round the town, known as the "Khandak," and celebrated in Moslem history, behind which he retired, and the Meccans, after besieging the place for some time, were forced to withdraw. The only fighting that took place was in a series of single combats between various champions from the opposing armies, in which Ali specially distinguished himself.

A truce was now concluded, one of the conditions being that Mohammed should be allowed to make the Mecca pilgrimage, which he did in company with many of his

disciples. This truce was soon afterwards broken, or alleged to have been broken, by the Meccans. The Prophet, whose power had been fast growing latterly, thereupon assembled an army of ten thousand men and marched rapidly on Mecca, which surrendered without a battle. The idols were destroyed, and the Kaaba again dedicated to the service of the one true God.

Several other campaigns were fought, in some of which the Prophet himself led the Moslem army against recalcitrant tribes. He sent messages to foreign rulers demanding their submission. At the time of his death, eleven years after his flight from Mecca, most of the Arabians had acknowledged his prophetic mission. He married in all eleven wives,* the most celebrated of whom, after Khadijah, who died before the Hegrah, is Aesha, the daughter of Abu Bakar. Beside Kasim, he had one other son, Ibrahim, who also died in early childhood. His daughter Fatima, shortly after their arrival in Medina, had been married to Ali, and had borne him two sons, Hassan and Hussein, of tragic destiny. The Prophet died and was buried at Medina at the age of sixty-three. Fatima was the only one of his children to survive him.

Mohammed in the prime of life was a man of medium stature, rather thick set. He had black hair and beard, a pleasant expression, and remarkably bright eyes. His complexion was fair.

This is no place to discuss the validity of his claims to Divine inspiration ; but one thing is as certain as anything can be that is not actually demonstrable, and that is that he believed in them himself. Regarded from an ordinary standpoint, he was a man of sound commonsense, personal bravery, and gentle disposition. His life was consistent with the ethical code he preached. He had great breadth of mind and a sense of humour capable of appreciating a joke against himself, as the following anecdote concerning him will show. In the early days of his sojourn in Medina, the Prophet and his followers were often hungry. He would never accept any luxuries for himself in which the latter could not share. One

* Authorities differ as to the exact number. Mohammed claimed for himself a special indulgence in this matter. Four is the greatest number permitted by the Koran.

day he and Ali were eating dates and depositing the stones in front of them. Mohammed put his stones with those of Ali, so that at the end of the meal there was a large heap in front of Ali, and none in front of the Prophet. "Surely," said he, in calling Ali's attention to this, "it is greedy to eat so many dates at one sitting." "Surely, O Apostle of God," responded Ali, "it is still more greedy to eat the stones as well as the dates." At which, we are told, the Prophet laughed heartily.

He detested hypocrisy in any form, and had no liking for pomp and ceremony. At the height of his power he lived the life of an ordinary citizen of Medina. He was always accessible and willing to discuss matters with, and explain things to, any one who cared to come to him. He was good to the poor and very fond of children. He constantly enjoined on his followers kindness to animals.

Mohammed did not claim the power of working miracles. The Koran itself, he said, was a miracle sufficient to convince the most stubborn. The marvellous stories related concerning him, how he made water gush from dry rocks, and put the moon up his sleeve, are mere fables; and find no place in the works of serious Moslem historians. He did claim, however, to have received miraculous help on several occasions—in the cave, for instance, and at the battle of Badr.

The death of Mohammed was followed by the defection of many of the tribes which had accepted his religion in his lifetime, and by a violent quarrel among his late lieutenants as to who should succeed him in the supreme temporal power. Ali, his cousin and son-in-law, who had followed his fortunes from the very first, and moreover distinguished himself both in the field and in council, had seemingly the best claim. There were, however, certain objections to his candidature; and the choice fell eventually on Abu Bakar, the Prophet's companion in the adventure of "The Cave."

No wiser selection probably could have been made. The situation was critical, and both tact and firmness were required to deal with it, which Abu Bakar possessed in far higher degree than Ali, who was more at home in a hand-to-hand fight, where valour rather than diplomacy was required.

Abu Bakar, then, assumed command, taking the title of "Kahleefa-t-urrasool," which is shortened and corrupted into "Caliph" in this language, and means "Successor of the Apostle." He was equally successful in settling domestic differences and in suppressing revolts among the Arab tribes. Several false prophets who had appeared in imitation of Mohammed had to be crushed.

These things accomplished, the Caliph turned his attention to foreign conquest. He sent an expedition to Syria, at that time a Byzantine province, which inflicted defeat after defeat on the Christian armies. Damascus, and soon afterwards Jerusalem, fell to the Moslem arms. Another Arab army advanced into Mesopotamia and completely routed the Persians in a series of pitched battles.

Abu Bakar died shortly after the capture of Damascus, bequeathing his powers to Omar, likewise one of the Prophet's oldest and most valued friends. This choice, at the time, met with fairly general acceptance. In assuming office, Omar pointed out that to be accurate he should be called the successor of the successor of the Apostle, and as this would go on indefinitely, he suggested an alternative title. "You are the faithful," said he, "and I am your prince; call me therefore Ameer-ul-mumineen (= Prince or Commander of the Faithful, the title claimed to-day by the Sultans of Turkey).

Omar continued the aggressive foreign policy initiated by Abu Bakar. Byzantium had not recovered from the astonishment and dismay occasioned by the loss of the Syrian province, when the Moslem general, Amru-bn-il-Aas, at the head of a few thousand warriors, followed by a motley rabble of women, children, and slaves, appeared in Egypt. This audacious incursion was viewed at first with amusement, which soon changed to consternation when in every engagement that took place the disciplined Roman legionaries broke and fled before the furious onslaught of the Arab swordsmen. Aided by the treachery of the Copts, who sided with the invaders against the Romans, Amru rapidly subdued all Egypt. Alexandria finally surrendered to him in A.H. 19 (A.D. 640). By order of Omar himself, so it is said, the famous library there was destroyed by the Arabs.

Space will not allow of our tracing further the history

of the Moslem conquests. Fifty years after the Prophet's flight to Medina, Islam was supreme in Spain, North Africa, Asia Minor, Arabia, Mesopotamia, and Persia, and was still spreading. As was to be expected, the empire founded in this way and built up so rapidly did not long hold together. The Benee Omayah in Spain, the Moguls in India, and others founded separate Moslem states, denying allegiance to the Caliphate of Bagdad. None the less it is probable that Haroun-er-Raschid and his successors wielded more absolute power over a greater number of human beings than any rulers before or since their time. Gibbon, in the "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," points out how nearly France came to sharing the fate of Spain. The issue hung on a single battle,* in which the Moslems were worsted. Had the result been otherwise, the Conqueror would probably have been an Arab and England to-day a Moslem instead of a Christian country.

The Arabian empires fell in time, but the propagation of Islam was carried on by the Turks with almost equal energy, and in the seventeenth century once more it seemed likely to subjugate Christianity in the West as it had done in the East. The fear of this happening dominated European policy for centuries, and has not yet entirely disappeared.

The courts of the Moslem emperors were centres of light and learning in the dark ages. Science and art prospered under their rule, as many splendid monuments testify. The frugal simplicity of life inculcated by the Prophet, and practised by the first Caliphs, gave place with their successors to an unexampled extravagance.

It remains, before taking leave of the subject, to describe briefly the events in Arabia that followed on the death of Othman, the third Caliph, who was assassinated in A.H. 35.

Ali, by this time an old man, took his place, but his right to do so was challenged by Mouawiyah, who accused him, quite falsely in all probability, of being concerned in the murder of Othman. Civil war broke out, and the empire was divided till the murder of Ali at Kerbela in A.H. 40 left his rival in possession of the field.

* Poitiers, A.D. 732.

Hassan, Ali's son, who succeeded him, abdicated in favour of Mouawiyah, who was the first to establish an hereditary dynasty in Islam.

His descendants, known as the Benee Omayah, reigned in the East till they were overthrown by the Benee Abbas, descended from the uncle of Mohammed, in A.H. 132.

The Benee Omayah, however, continued to rule in Andalusia till the Arab was replaced by the Moorish Empire three centuries later.

Mouawiyah was succeeded by his son Yazeed, who is accused of having instigated the murders of Hassan and Hussein, the grandsons of the Prophet. The former was poisoned, and the latter slain in battle, together with most of his family, near Cufa in Mesopotamia. Their deaths may be considered as marking the end of the first great epoch in the history of Islam: the period in which the rulers and generals were men who had known Mohammed personally, and had shared the privations and struggles of the early part of his prophetic career.

What marvellous changes they had witnessed with their own eyes may be realized when we recall that at the battle of Badr, one of the most decisive in the world's history, the Moslem host numbered but three hundred and fourteen warriors. About forty years later Ali and Mouawiyah, in skirmishing on the banks of the Euphrates, preliminary to a serious engagement, lost between them seventy thousand men.

The most surprising transformations conceived by the author of the "Arabian Nights" do not surpass in wonder what these men actually experienced. The handful of camel herdsmen and petty traders who in their youth took part in the faction fighting round Mecca and Medina, found themselves in their middle age commanding armies or governing vast provinces. Mouawiyah, who, at the time of Mohammed's death, was old enough to appreciate him, came to rule, ere his own decease, over an empire greater than that of Rome, and to dispose of riches almost beyond computation.

We may now turn from the history to the tenets of Mohammed's religion, and endeavour to understand wherein lay the force that produced these astonishing

results. The revelations, to which allusion has already been made, continued at irregular intervals throughout the Prophet's life. They were communicated by him to his companions, who either wrote them down or learnt them by heart. They varied much in character. Some took the form of allegorical rhapsodies, some were straightforward admonitions. Others, again, were concerned with the ordinary affairs of daily life, having regard especially to the conditions then obtaining. History, politics, and philosophy were dealt with. A complete civil and criminal code has been deduced from them.

At the time of Mohammed's death no attempt had been made to put them together in the form of a book. It does not seem to have occurred to him that this should be done if they were to be preserved. Abu Bakar, however, observing how rapidly the generation which had known the Prophet was passing away, perceived the danger, and appointed a sort of "Royal Commission" to collect and collate them. The result of their labours, which were not completed till the reign of Othman, is the Koran. Though it is rank heresy to doubt the authenticity of any part of the work, one may be forgiven for assuming that much was lost and much more has been inaccurately rendered. No attempt was made to arrange the chapters in chronological order or with regard to their subject-matter.

The Koran teaches that there is one God only, eternal, infinite, and incomprehensible, and that he was the God of Adam, Moses, Christ, and the other prophets of old. He has revealed his will several times previously, in the form of books, the most important among them being the Taurat and the Ingeel, *i.e.* the Old Testament and the Gospel. The current versions of these having however become corrupted, the Koran is revealed to Mohammed to supersede them.*

* The Arabic word for "a God" is Ilahun—in the nominative singular. With the definite article, this becomes by elision Allahu, and means *the* God, *i.e.* the one true God. So the creed "La Ilaha illa'llaha" means "There is no God but *the* God." The curious idea that "Alla" is a deity peculiar to the Moslems must have arisen from ignorance of the meaning of the word, which is used by Arabic-speaking Christians as well as Moslems.

The word "Koran" simply means "reading." Mosque is derived from "Masgid," and means literally "a place of bowing."

The main dogmas on which the religions derived from these books are based remain unaltered. The theorems of the immortality of the soul, the day of judgment, heaven and hell, Satan the enemy of mankind, angels, devils, etc., as previously enunciated, are confirmed in general principles by the Koran. The moral code set forth is that of the ten commandments, and exhortations to humility, chastity, temperance, and charity occur constantly. Many Biblical stories tending to illustrate these virtues are repeated.

A great part of the book, however, is devoted to insisting on the absolute unity of the Godhead. God, we are told, will forgive every sin except that of associating Him with something else. The 112th chapter, which is considered equal in value to a third of the whole book, runs as follows :

" Say He is one God, the eternal God : He begetteth not, neither was He begat : neither is there any like unto Him."

In fact, quite a third of the Koran is actually devoted to saying the same thing in other words.

This brings us to the thorny subject of the relations between Islam and Christianity in matters of dogma. There is no doubt that Mohammed himself fully expected to " rope in "—if one may use such an expression—both Jews and Christians, and was bitterly disappointed at his failure to do so. The Koran contains frequent references to Jesus the son of Mary, who is called the Messiah and the " pure in heart " ; the doctrine of the virgin birth receives confirmation. The Jews are reproached for their refusal to accept Christ's teaching ; the Christians for their perversion of it. The doctrine that Christ was the Son of God is characterized as a fearful blasphemy.

It is evident that the two religions come near to standing on common ground. It must be remembered that the doctrine thus denounced was interpreted at the time in the most literal sense possible. So it would appear to be to-day by the official Churches of Christendom, but it is probable that this view would not be so tenaciously held but for the formidable opposition to it offered by the Koran. With the exception of the Prophet himself, thinkers on both sides have been much more concerned

to discover fresh differences than grounds for accord. Throughout the Koran Jews and Christians are referred to as "people of the book," and treated on a different footing from ordinary unbelievers and idolaters. The words of the Koran on the subject of the crucifixion are obscure. "They did not kill him, neither did they crucify him, but something like unto him . . . and God took him to Himself."

Justification by faith is another very contentious point. Going farther, apparently, than what had preceded it, the Koran promises eventual salvation to all believers in the cardinal doctrine, whatever they may do in this life—a postulate to which the existence of purgatory is evidently a necessary consequence.

The tenet of predestination enunciated in the Koran has been vehemently assailed, and Moslems themselves are not agreed about it. It seems, however, merely a corollary to the proposition of an all-powerful and all-knowing deity.

It is worthy of note that orthodox Islam accepts as dogmas certain beliefs which are held by the Churches of Christendom to be irreconcilable one with another. The doctrine that the eventual fate of the soul is foreordained is of course the essence of Calvinism. Moslem ideas concerning the Caliphate correspond nearly to the Roman Catholic views on apostolic succession. Yet the supremacy of the Scripture is insisted on as in the Church of England. The Caliph, though he is supposed to enjoy to some extent Divine guidance, is held incompetent to decide whether or not a proposed action is in keeping with the law, and must submit to the judgment of those versed in the interpretation of the sacred books. In modern Turkey this right of veto is exercised by the Sheikh of Islam, who answers questions put to him as to the legality of a proceeding by what is called a fatwa. Thus "Is it lawful to depose a Caliph who misgoverns?" Fatwa: "The sacred law says, Yes."

Concerning that part of the Koran which deals with practical legislation, we need only remark that the civil laws still work fairly well, and that the criminal code is much too draconian for modern use.

The positive duties of a believer are four, namely prayer,

alms, fasting, and pilgrimage for such as can afford it. To these we shall refer again later. The most distinctive negative precepts of the Koran are its prohibition of certain kinds of food, pork among them, usury, gaming, and wine. It is not, however, universally admitted that the use of the last in moderation is altogether forbidden. In any case, this law is very badly kept.

Beside the Koran, and next to it in importance in Moslem eyes, are the six books of the "Sunna" or "Ahadeeth." These are the traditions concerning the Prophet. Though belief in them is not an article of faith, they are none the less accepted unreservedly by most orthodox Moslems, and to them may be traced many of the superstitious fancies which now disfigure the primitive simplicity of the Islamic creed. They are very numerous—the writer has before him a book containing ten thousand of Mohammed's alleged sayings, of which probably less than one per cent. have the smallest claim to credence. Unless, indeed, the Prophet was in the habit of contradicting himself every few minutes, the most cursory study of them renders this obvious. He is reputed to have said, by way of illustration, that Islam would eventually be divided into seventy-two sects, all of which would end in hell, except one. He did not say which!

The first part of this alleged prophecy has, however, very nearly come true. Islam, to-day, is divided into two main branches, each of which considers the other heretical. These in turn are subdivided into sects differing from one another on points of ritual only, and there are a number of less important cults doubtfully classed as Moslems. The schism between the two great divisions, known as the Sunna and Sheia, began in the political quarrel about the succession. To put it as briefly as may be, the Sunna hold that the office of Caliph devolves naturally on the most powerful Moslem prince for the time being, or on any one else elected thereto, irrespective of descent or even nationality. The Sheia, on the other hand, contend that the office is for ever vested in the descendants of the Prophet through Ali and Fatima. They believe that Ali was unjustly deprived of his rights by the first three Caliphs.

The question is of great importance at the present day, in view of Ottoman pan-Islamic aspirations. According

to the first view there is no reason why the Sultan of Turkey should not be Commander of the Faithful and claim as such the allegiance of the Moslem world, but in the Sheia creed this is *ex hypothesi* impossible.

The Persians, about half the Indian Moslems, and many of the Arab tribes are Sheia ; the Turks, Africans, Afghans, and the rest generally, are Sunna. The latter are divided into four principal sects, regarded as of equal orthodoxy, and named respectively, Shafei, Hanafi, Maliki, and Hambali—after the learned men who founded them. There is no necessity for the Moslem to belong to any one of them; he may, if he please, remain an independent believer.

We have, so far, been considering Islam as it appears from a study of the history and contents of the sacred books themselves. Had we proceeded to deduce their nature from the opinions concerning them held by the present-day professors of the religion, the result would have been different. The Moslem ecclesiastic of to-day regards the Koran, not merely as an inspired utterance, in the ordinary sense, but as the actual word of God Himself put into the mouth of His Prophet. As such, it is incontrovertible and eternal, and no free interpretation, having regard to altered circumstances, is permissible.

To realize his point of view, we may imagine the case of a Christian who took the books of Revelation, and Leviticus absolutely literally, instead of regarding the one as allegorical and the other as out of date. Had the Koran described a bull with fifteen brazen tails, the Moslem child would be taught to believe that such a beast actually existed somewhere or other. Because the lopping off of hands and feet as a punishment for theft was necessary and desirable in Arabia a thousand years ago, the same, it is insisted, must be equally desirable in Constantinople at the present time.

The moral precepts of the Koran are neglected, while the minutiæ of its ritual are strictly observed. A devout Turk, to put it shortly, thinks that as long as he says his prayers regularly, fasts in Ramadan, and avoids pork, it does not much matter what else he does or does not do.

This very sketchy exposition of a vast and highly-contentious subject will have served its purpose if it

helps readers unacquainted with the subject to understand in some measure the Moslem's position in modern life, and his relations with his Christian neighbours. Since Islam has fared very badly at the hands of Christian writers, both ancient and modern, it will be more interesting to look at that question from the other side—if only for a change.

Putting aside as untenable the theory that the Prophet was an absolute impostor, we will deal first with the favourite accusation that his religion has been propagated solely by the sword. Yet the Moslem sacred law states that no one shall be compelled to accept Islam; and this has been more than once invoked by the ecclesiastical against the temporal authority in Turkey. The Arab Caliphs enjoined on their generals respect, not only for the persons, but for the property and religious edifices of Christians. We ourselves have not been entirely guiltless in the matter of forcing our civilization on peoples who did not want it, and at the time of writing a war is in progress declared by a Christian on a Moslem power for that avowed purpose.

The history of Islam is a record of bloodshed and debauchery, but not more so than that of Christendom. Fanatical religious sentiment has been the cause of much suffering and strife in the case of the former, but it is doubtful if a parallel for the treachery of St. Bartholomew's Eve or the cruelties of the Inquisition can be found in Moslem annals.

The position of women in Moslem countries is often pointed to as an evil inherent in this religious system, but neither the Koran nor the Prophet can fairly be held responsible for their present-day seclusion. This custom in fact originated in the reign of the Caliph Omar, and was unknown in the early days of Islam. It is not of Arabian origin, but derived from the Far East. The Bedou women of this day do not veil their faces, though the practice is general in towns. As regards polygamy, which, though not enjoined, is permitted within certain limits by the Koran, it must be remembered that in the world as it then was, and even to-day in countries like Arabia, there is bound to be a great numerical preponderance of women over men, for the reason that the

former are so much more exposed to the accidents of life—war principal among them. A monogamistic system would have involved a great hardship to this surplus of women and a very serious decline in the birth-rate—a matter of supreme importance to a community when death by violence is the most probable termination to a man's career. Such a system would have destroyed the whole social fabric of the day, and however excellent in principle was clearly impossible in practice.

Very much the same may be said of the institution of slavery. The most that could be done here was to regulate a necessary evil. The Koran abounds in injunctions that slaves are to be well treated and states that no act is more pleasing to God than their manumission. It must be remembered that Moslem ideas on certain points are based on a conception of human life totally different from our own. The introduction to the "solemnization of matrimony," for example, represents a frame of mind quite inconceivable to them.

It is not fair to base charges of grossness and sensuality on certain passages in the Koran relating to the hereafter; and those who do so lose sight of the circumstances in which it was revealed or imagined. If the doctrine of heaven and hell is to be worth anything, if the hope of reward and the fear of punishment are to influence men's conduct, then the one must be depicted as blissful and the other terrible in terms which will be comprehended by those to whom it is intended to appeal. It is not wonderful that paradise should be presented to the inhabitants of Arabia as a land of shady trees, green meadows, and running water; nor that beautiful women should find a place in the Elysium promised to the race which, as the story goes, absorbed nine-tenths of the entire amount of erotic passion destined for the whole of mankind. A state of infinite peace and happiness in the contemplation of virtue apotheosized may be a philosophical conception of heaven, but can Mohammed's followers be blamed for wanting something a little more definite, and easy to understand? If we must persist in interpreting the words of the Koran as positive statements of fact rather than poetic imagery we must, to be just and logical, treat the Testaments in the same way. I once listened to a sermon

in which the preacher described heaven as an eternal Sunday. There is no accounting for taste, but if this be so, I do not intend to go there ; and feel no shame in avowedly preferring the paradise which, so the Prophet said, lies under the shadow of swords.

The fact that Moslem communities find religion an obstacle to their progress in civilization is not, as has been pointed out, entirely the fault of the former. It would not be possible, as has been well said, to conduct Great Britain's foreign policy on lines consistent with a perfectly literal interpretation of the "sermon on the Mount." Yet every official act in Turkey has to be made to fit in somehow with a "sacred law" derived from the Koran and traditions which, like the law of the Medes and Persians, cannot alter. So far from a more liberal interpretation becoming gradually accepted, the opposite has occurred. A general prohibition against usury is now made to include the businesses of bankers and insurance companies. These very qualities of directness and invariability are a source of strength as well as weakness. Believers are told what to do and what not to do in terms which leave no room for misunderstanding and little to the imagination. Sentiment and emotionalism are conspicuously absent from the Koran ; a spade is called a spade, and trivialities are brushed aside. A night spent in arms in a righteous cause or a kind action done to the poor or fatherless are worth in the sight of God, we are assured, months of prayer and fasting. This habit of literal acceptance causes Moslems to give practical effect to the dictum that the believers are brothers irrespective of race or colour, and explains the success and growing power of Islam in Africa to-day.

In the conclusion of the writer, religion has had very little to do with the development of the Near East for a long time past. Every country, it is said, gets the Government it deserves. Had the Turks in the days of their conquests and expansion adopted Christianity instead of Islam as their State religion, it is doubtful whether the Ottoman Empire of to-day would be better governed or more progressive than it actually is. Few people, at any rate, who have had opportunities for observing Christian and Moslem populations of the same race, living under

similar conditions, would attempt to prove that it would *à posteriori*.

This introduction would be incomplete without a reference to the various movements for the reformation of Islam that have taken place subsequent to the death of its founder. It is remarkable that these have generally originated in Arabia itself. The force of the initial eruption soon expended itself. After the fall of the Bagdad Caliphs, the Arabs as a political force ceased to count. They became absorbed in the populations of the countries they had conquered or else returned to their nomad state. Arabia at the present time is very much as the Prophet knew it. Though most Bedou tribes profess Islam, they have little regard for its precepts or ceremonies.

Yet the most important of these revivals was originated by an Arab of Nĕgd, Abd-ul-Wahab, in the middle of the eighteenth century. Disgusted by certain superstitious and idolatrous practices he had observed on the pilgrimage, he preached on his return to his own country a simpler and purer conception of the faith. This revival met with great success for a time. The "Wahabies" captured Mecca and Medina and destroyed Kerbela. They threatened the very existence of the Turkish Empire in the early part of last century, but were finally crushed by Mohammed Ali in 1817–19, in a campaign which is remarkable as being the only occasion on record when Central Arabia has been invaded in force. The "Senussi" *confrérie* represents another movement of the same nature which is receiving less attention than it deserves. The more celebrated "Mahdi" of the Sudan does not, however, fall in this category. A remarkable saying, recorded of the Prophet, is that Islam, after attaining great power, will gradually decline till it becomes little more than a name in the world, but will eventually be regenerated by "The Mahdi," a sort of Moslem Messiah, who is to convert the whole world, and whose coming will herald its end. The Sudanese "Mahdi" claimed to be this Messiah, and requires to be distinguished from the various "Mullahs" and others who claim the title of "Mahdi," which merely means divinely guided, and without the definite article has no special significance.

Finally, an allusion is necessary to the religious societies of Islam. It would appear from the Koran and the traditions that all forms of monasticism or sacerdotalism are contrary to the spirit of the religion. These cults, known as Derweishes, bound by certain vows, and practising ceremonies of their own invention, are none the less very numerous in most Moslem countries. Their practices and beliefs are characterized in many cases by the grossest superstition, and the ridiculous antics of the dancing, howling, and other Derweish bands have nothing in common with the simple and dignified ritual prescribed by the Koran. Europeans, however, not conversant with the East, often find some difficulty in dissociating the two—a confusion of ideas not unnatural when we consider how easily a casual Moslem traveller in Southern Europe might be led to consider that belief in the evil eye formed part of the State religion.

PART I

CHAPTER I

LONDON TO BEYROUT

The town of Mecca, as we have already seen, contains a temple which was an object of veneration in pre-Islamic days. In order to make clear how and why the Prophet came to substitute Islam for the old idolatrous religion without disturbing the sanctity of the Meccan shrine, we must re-edit a little Biblical history from a Moslem standpoint.

The temple known as the Kaaba (the word means a cube) was built, then, originally by Adam in the likeness of a house he had seen in paradise before the Fall. It was rebuilt after the Flood by Abraham and Ishmael, and reconsecrated to the service of the true God. The Arabs, however, in the course of centuries fell away from the true faith, and a polytheistic religion grew up which, while losing sight of the deity in honour of whom it was founded, continued to regard the Kaaba itself as an object of worship. Such was the state of affairs when Mohammed began his preaching, and the earlier revelations he received made Jerusalem the "Kibla," that is to say the most sacred spot on earth, towards which worshippers turn when praying. Later on, however, this direction was cancelled: Mecca was substituted for Jerusalem, and the Kaaba pronounced to be the first and holiest of temples. A pilgrimage to it, once in a lifetime, was declared to be obligatory on every Moslem for whom the undertaking should be possible.*

Reasons of policy accounted for this "change of

* A certain period in every year was ordained for the observance of certain rites in and around Mecca, the due performance of which on the appointed days constitutes a Moslem's claim to be a Hagi or pilgrim.

front," in the opinion of non-Moslem critics. The conversion of the Meccans themselves constituted, during the greater part of the Prophet's career as such, his principal immediate aim. Since the worldly prosperity of the Meccans depended then, as it does to-day, on the sanctity of their city, they were evidently more likely to listen to reason if the new religion they were invited to embrace left this undisturbed. Mohammed, by the above ingenious method, succeeded in actually enhancing it. His quarrel with the Jews also is believed to have influenced him in this matter.

Be the explanation what it may, the temple, the city, and even the surrounding country were proclaimed to be of so highly sanctified a character that no unbeliever should dare thenceforward to set foot in this sacred territory. It is not the least likely that the Prophet meant to exclude Jews and Christians, but then he was very much more broad-minded than any of his successors have been. His commands, however, were construed in that way, and, strange as it may seem, no instance is on record of any one having transgressed them openly and returned to tell the tale.

This prohibition against the intrusion of unbelievers has been extended to include Medina, which acquires its special sanctity from the fact that the Prophet himself and many of his companions are buried there. Most Islamic sects set high value on a visit to this city, and the Sheia esteem one as being almost equal in merit to the pilgrimage itself.

It would be strange indeed if the exclusive character of these cities had not excited in Western Europe the liveliest curiosity concerning them. Before going further, let it be clearly understood that any one who wishes to visit them may do so, after publicly professing Islam. It would be necessary to go before a Kadhi, repeat certain formulæ and submit, in most cases, to one of the minor operations of surgery. This done, and a sufficiently long apprenticeship served to convince the local Moslem feeling that the convert's professions were sincere, there would be no objection to his making the pilgrimage. A long and drivelling correspondence between himself, the Foreign Office, and the Sublime Porte,

would probably end in the last named having exhausted all possible pretexts for further delay, giving him a special passport. This once obtained, the Ottoman Government would be responsible for his welfare, and he would be enabled to travel to Mecca and Medina without running any special risk. He would probably be given an escort and otherwise looked after. He would generally be regarded as a legitimate object for curiosity, if not suspicion.

The only alternative to this unattractive prospect, if one wishes to see these places, is to go there in disguise.

The writer made the pilgrimage in the year 1908–9, partly out of curiosity, more particularly to accustom himself to Arab ways with a view to future journeys in disguise into the unexplored interior. The rank and reputation of a Hagi, that is to say, one who has duly performed certain rites on the prescribed day at Mecca, is useful to the traveller in Moslem countries.

The following pages contain an account of the journey that I wrote on my return, and did not originally intend to publish. It shows that the Hedjaz is by no means the inaccessible country it is often supposed to be. Masaudi, I must explain, is a Mombasa Swahili whom I took to England on purpose to assist me in the enterprise, and Abdul Wahid is an Arab from Aleppo, established in Berlin, whom I "signed on" later.

The three of us foregathered at Marseilles on September 23, 1908. The pilgrimage was taking place that year at the beginning of January, but as I intended to go to Medina first and to stay some time in both places, we were not starting too early. I also wanted to stay sufficiently long in Damascus to convince myself that my assumption of an Eastern character was effective, before entering the forbidden territory.

The first difficulty that confronted us was how to procure for Masaudi and myself the necessary passports. Abdul Wahid already had one, which only needed renewing. We adopted certain measures to overcome this difficulty, as a result of which I got a Turkish passport describing me as one Ali bin Mohammed, aged twenty-five, a subject of Zanzibar, on his way to Mecca. This document lately fell into the hands of the Turkish authori-

ties, and there has been some trouble in consequence. I had better therefore confine myself to saying that the official who issued it to me did not realize that I was an Englishman, and that bribery played no part in the transaction.

The question of passports being disposed of thus satisfactorily, we were all anxious to get out of Marseilles as soon as possible. The hotel at which we were putting up, though cheap—three francs per diem—was somewhat malodorous. We spent the afternoon in visiting the offices of various steamship companies, hoping to get second-class berths to either Egypt or Syria. This proved impossible, all the steamers being full up. The only accommodation available for the next fortnight was first-class P. and O., or third-class Messageries, neither of which suited us at all.

It then occurred to me that we might go on to Genoa, whence I knew that there were a number of lesser known steamship lines plying East, and where I thought we should run much less risk of being recognized, in case it was necessary to wait for any length of time. Moreover, I had never before been there. Having decided on this course, we lost little time in making our few arrangements, and left Marseilles at midnight. We got to Genoa at 4 p.m. next day, and found a cheap but by no means bad hotel on the road leading from the station. Indeed the only real objection to it was the unceasing noise of traffic rumbling over the paved streets, which prevented one from hearing a word that was said. In the course of the evening we visited all the steamship offices, and eventually took second-class berths in the "Falerno," which was not starting for the next eight days, but was the first ship available. The prospect of so long a wait was by no means agreeable in the circumstances, but there was nothing else for it.

I will pass over the days we spent at Genoa. We ate, slept, read, and wandered about the town, and were very bored. The other people of the hotel were Italians, and most of them, I should say, commercial travellers. They were not inquisitive—which was the main thing.

We embarked on a Tuesday evening, and found the "Falerno" to be a ship of some two thousand tons burthen,

and of a distinctly shoddy appearance. There were six berths in our cabin, and a saloon which served all other purposes. On deck there was no accommodation at all for the second class, and precious little for the first. The first few days were tolerable, for we practically had the ship to ourselves, but after Naples every berth was filled. The people in our cabin were very sea-sick when it was rough, and very noisy when it wasn't. We took in all nine days to get to Alexandria. There were no English people on board, but I think nearly every other European nationality had a representative. We of course kept very much to ourselves and sat at the end of the table. I admitted to knowing a little French, and occasionally conversed in that language with a rather good-looking, and very well-dressed man, who told me he was an officer of the Khedive's household, and whom I strongly suspect to have been his valet.

We arrived at Alexandria late at night, but did not land till the following morning. We were taken at once to the passport office, where we produced our passports and had them duly "visé'd." We then passed on to the Customs shed. They asked if we had anything to declare, and we said we hadn't. I should explain that previous to coming ashore I had taken the precaution to pocket all the pistols and ammunition in our possession, as well as certain papers of a compromising nature, such as my English passport, cheque book, and so on. We also had in our luggage some watches and other things intended for presents later on, among them several of some value. These had been put in the pockets of the clothes to avoid breakage. There were also a medicine case, bandages, and various similar things. They made us open all the boxes and turn out the contents, which they searched carefully, reading every paper, opening every book, and laying violent hands on everything they found of the slightest value. The first box being thus disposed of, we were told to repack it. Realizing, that after all this trouble with the boxes, they could not intend to neglect the contents of our pockets, Masaudi and I, while doing so, contrived to include the pistols, papers, and other things. In this way we managed to offload what we were carrying, but to communicate with Abdul

Wahid was impossible, and I foresaw disaster imminent. Sure enough, our boxes having been gone through, we were herded into an inner apartment and searched. Masaudi and I were innocent enough of contraband articles, nothing more exciting coming to light than £200 in gold. Abdul Wahid, however, was made to disgorge pistols, ammunition, postcards, and jewellery in an apparently endless stream, all of which were pounced upon by the excited officials. After a consultation we were all arrested as suspicious characters, and put under a guard to await the arrival of the Mudir. That functionary when he eventually turned up two hours late decided that the case was too serious for him to deal with, and referred it to the Pasha. It being Ramadan the Pasha did not appear till about one o'clock, and when he did I saw at once that he was one of those people with whom fasting does not agree. He was in a bad temper. We were subjected to a searching cross-examination. The medicine case and instruments in particular came in for much undesirable attention. They could not imagine what we could want with such things. As luck would have it I had previously arranged with Abdul Wahid that in the event of any discussion he should lay claim to anything of this sort and conduct the conversation. To this foresight, and our good luck in returning the documents unobserved, we owed our salvation. Abdul Wahid, being the principal offender, came in for most of the suspicion attaching to us collectively. No one took much notice of Masaudi and myself. But so far as his being a true Arab was concerned his *bona fides* was unquestionable, and he talked so much and so fast that he eventually tired them out. We were dismissed with a caution, all dutiable things being retained at the Customs House, to be given up when we sailed for Beyrout. So about 2.30 p.m. we emerged once more into the sunlight, very hungry and tired, but feeling that when all was said and done we had got distinctly the best of the encounter. I came in for the warmest congratulations from Abdul Wahid on having got rid of the documents in the manner I have described. He was of course unaware that I had done so, and when we were searched regarded discovery, with its attendant publicity, if no worse, as absolutely inevitable. When

nothing at all was found on us his amazement was only equalled by his relief, and I felt that I had risen several degrees in his estimation from that day forward.

We asked the sentry at the gates to recommend us a cheap hotel suitable for persons of our description, which he did unhesitatingly. We found it to consist of a suite of rooms situated over a barber's shop, and when we came to inspect the interior I could not help thinking that the sentry had formed an undeservedly small opinion of us. However, it was certainly cheap (one franc per diem), and reasonably clean. After a furious row with the porters carrying our boxes, we eventually settled with them, got a change and some food, and refreshed ourselves by a short sleep. In the evening we repaired to the nearest Hamam (Turkish bath). I now took the precaution to shave my head with a view to looking as "un-European" as possible, and dressed in Arab clothes, as also did the others. Hitherto we had been wearing our ordinary clothes, with the addition only of the tarboosh. I was pleased to find that our appearance seemed to excite no particular interest. During the few days we spent at Alexandria we were occasionally asked from what country we came—being obviously foreigners. Abdul Wahid usually said Bagdad, which did for all three of us; and when it was necessary to explain further Zanzibar satisfied the most curious.

The next day we took deck passages on a Khedivial Mail ship for Beyrout. The first available was starting in three days' time, but as the delay afforded me an opportunity to get accustomed to the new conditions of life, as well as to practise colloquial Egyptian Arabic, it was not unwelcome. The language question, which strikes most people as the greatest obstacle to travelling in disguise, is not really so formidable as it appears. In Arabic there are so many dialects, so widely divergent in their pronunciation and vocabulary, that peculiarities of either excite little attention. A man from the Yemen, for instance, does not readily understand two Egyptians talking together, though he may converse with them himself without difficulty; this is for the reason that strangers in conversation one with another can employ the more correct pronunciation and grammar more

nearly approximating to that of the classical or written language, and can further avoid local slang and any particular variety of dialectical pronunciation that might make their speech difficult to understand. Then again, there are large numbers of people in all Eastern countries calling themselves Arabs who are really Persians, Kurds, Turks, etc., most of whom are physically incapable of giving the true Bedoui * pronunciation to the various consonants characteristic of the Arabic language. This remark applies also to the Egyptians: a Cairo-born man can no more pronounce ض properly than if he came from Clapham Common.

I overcame all difficulty in the matter by the simple expedient of saying that in Zanzibar the colloquial language was Swahili and that no one talked Arabic—which is a fact. Among the people with whom I associated no one knew Swahili at all. I was able consequently to ask Masaudi's advice openly in any difficulty without the slightest fear of being understood, a facility of which I often availed myself. I was careful always to talk to him very fast, so as to give the impression that I was speaking my native language. On the few occasions that I had to speak Swahili to natives of those parts, I merely inverted the statement and told them that having been born in Muscat my real language was Arabic. I never found any one sufficiently well acquainted with both languages to find me out, and of course I was at pains to avoid the society of any one who was likely to be able to do so. Burton I believe employed very much the same device on his journey. It is in fact the obvious thing to do.

We left Alexandria on a Wednesday, sailing about 4 o'clock in the afternoon. At 2 o'clock we went down to the Customs House and recovered our things. We were then taken to the police station, where our passports were again inspected, and our countenances subjected to a careful scrutiny to see if they resembled any of the criminals whose photographs were pasted over the walls.

* In this and other similar words the termination "i" indicates the singular or the adjective. The plural is "Bedou." I have taken no account of the feminine singular "Bedouwiyah," which also serves for the adjectival plural.

Having satisfied themselves on this point, the police passed us on to the quarantine office, where our luggage was again opened, but as it contained nothing of the nature of dirty clothes we were excused fumigation and introduced forthwith to another room to await the doctor who was to examine our persons. The examination was quite farcical. We were made to stand in a line down which the doctor walked prodding us under the arms—after which ceremony we were released and allowed to go on board. The idea is to discover the glandular swellings which are the characteristic symptom of plague ; but of course a case sufficiently advanced to be detected by such means would scarcely be in a state to start on a journey, so that I cannot see that these formalities serve any good purpose. The inspection, if really necessary, should at least be thorough and include temperature-taking, which alone can be relied on to afford indication of incipient cases. As carried out at present the quarantine regulations in this part of the East are merely vexatious.

The steamer was one of the largest of the line, over 5,000 tons, if I remember rightly. She was very crowded —on deck at least. We were located in the after part of the ship and were apparently very late in arriving, as all the best places had already been taken. After considerable squabbling we succeeded in planting our carpet on top of a large chest fixed to the port bulwark, which seemed to me a peculiarly advantageous position, being clean, and well above the crowd. The objection to it we discovered shortly after starting, when it was too late to change. It was in fact the ice chest, and throughout the voyage, whenever the cook wanted anything out of it, we had to roll up our blankets and other belongings and get off—to our own extreme annoyance and the amusement of our fellow-passengers. This happened on the average ten times a day. That evening the boatswain, a Turk, offered us his cabin for the sum of £2. We said ten shillings and finally compromised for a louis. This cabin, which contained two wooden bunks, was placed directly over the rudder. It afforded us some welcome privacy, and shelter in bad weather, but it was almost impossible to sleep there owing to the heat and

stuffy atmosphere, to say nothing of the size and ferocity of the fleas that infested it. The other passengers were a medley of all races and colours—Greeks, Italians, Egyptians, Arabs from the West, Syrians, and Turks—all crowded together on deck so that it was almost impossible to walk without treading on some one. Companions in misfortune—for the sea was rough and they were mostly bad sailors—they were not disposed to be quarrelsome, which was just as well. By no means all of them were poor people. Many no doubt were better able to afford a first-class fare than some of those travelling that way. Moslems prefer as a rule to travel on deck, on account of the food question. This always presents a difficulty to the more old-fashioned, since according to the letter of the law meat is only fit for food when the animal has been slaughtered in a certain way and by a Mussulman. In Mohammedan countries meat lawfully killed receives a Government stamp, which must be shown to the customer on demand. Moreover they are deterred from eating European food by the fear that pork of some kind is used in its preparation. Of course their rules, if faithfully observed, would prevent a Mussulman travelling in Europe at all. It is generally considered, however, that the avoidance of anything known to contain swine-flesh complies sufficiently with the spirit of the law.

We reached Port Said the following morning, and spent the day ashore—which illustrates the absurdity of the quarantine laws. Any one could have gone aboard there who pleased, simply by saying that he had come from Alexandria. Port Said is not a pleasant place at any time, but never before have I disliked it so much. We were thankful to get off again. The next morning we arrived at Jaffa—the port of Jerusalem. Here a good many passengers disembarked and more came aboard. The roadstead is open, and in the rough weather we were experiencing there was sufficient sea to make landing in boats difficult. Having now reached Turkish territory, we were once more quarantined. A disinfecting engine was brought aboard and we were told to strip, in order that our clothes might be disinfected and ourselves examined. Here I drew the line, and for a dollar bribed

one of the officials to let us off. He took it so readily that I knew at once I was overpaying him. We got a ticket to certify that we had been "done," and passed along to the doctor who was in a saloon at the other end of the ship, to get our landing certificate for Beyrout. We were thus enabled to enjoy the spectacle of the fumigation of the other passengers, which we certainly should not have done had we been waiting our own turn. Their language as the clothes were handed back wringing wet, and in the case of coloured things often quite ruined, was worth hearing. Having finished spoiling the clothes they proceeded to squirt the remainder of the fluid over the ship at random, thereby giving rise to more blasphemy on the part of people who happened to get it in their eyes. When as much general inconvenience as possible had been thus occasioned, the quarantine launch sailed away and we were allowed to proceed.

The wind had been rising all day, and with it the sea. We reached Haifa at nightfall, and stayed an hour. On leaving the sheltered bay near Mount Carmel we got into very rough water. Several heavy seas broke on board, and our position on the ice chest becoming too precarious, Masaudi and I took refuge in our cabin ; but Abdul Wahid, who had long passed the stage where drowning possesses any terrors, refused to shift. Not wishing, however, to lose him in this manner, we hauled him and his belongings off, and deposited him in the weather scuppers, which, though now well awash, yet seemed the safest and driest place left. The state of the decks was unpleasant, and I congratulated myself on having taken the cabin. After a night which was uncomfortable for us but must have been ten times more so for those on deck, we reached calmer water, and entered Beyrout harbour about sunrise.

It was here that I was chiefly apprehensive of trouble with the authorities, for I had always understood that in Turkey they were very cautious about admitting strangers without the surest credentials. I was quite prepared for many inconvenient questions about ourselves, and thought it by no means unlikely that we should be detained for a time. We had therefore made somewhat elaborate preparations for all such eventuali-

ties, and were thoroughly primed as to the answers we should give to almost any conceivable inquiry. Should my medicine chest for instance give rise to suspicion, Abdul Wahid was to say that his brother, who was a doctor in Bagdad, had asked him to buy it for him in Europe—which we thought would account for the former's ignorance of the contents and their uses. In this way we hoped to avoid a repetition of the trouble which had so nearly landed us in disaster at Alexandria.

As a matter of fact our precautions were unnecessary. On landing we were shown into a small office where a man in uniform "visé'd" our passports after a bare glance at their contents. He displayed some slight interest in my sword, a Muscat weapon of somewhat peculiar pattern, but after making a few playful passes at the office table he handed it back without comment. We went on to the Customs, where they made us open our boxes without even asking if we had anything to declare. After a cursory inspection they asked about our firearms, which we produced. On hearing that we were pilgrims they offered no objection to our bringing them in, though we had to pay a trifling duty.

While awaiting the completion of these formalities I had leisure to observe the method of procedure in the case of the other passengers, and saw that they were not all escaping so lightly. Some of the European travellers seemed to be undergoing much the same sort of ordeal that we had been subjected to at Alexandria. I believe that the new era of liberty which was then supposed to be dawning for Turkey had something to do with the relaxation in our own case of the police inquisition which was formerly so troublesome. Be the explanation what it may, we ourselves passed without difficulty, and found ourselves at last in Turkish territory and free to go where we would.

For two francs a night we got two large clean rooms in a hotel, if it may so be called, for food was not obtainable on the premises. We spent the day in wandering about the town, making a few necessary purchases. Beyrout is interesting in its way, and more Eastern in character than any place I have visited in Egypt, though far less so than Damascus. The population consists

very largely of Christians and Jews. I would have liked to spend several days here, but for various reasons we decided to go on to Damascus. We were all very thankful to have no more travelling by sea ahead of us (as we then thought), and were rather elated at the success which had thus far attended us. After the evening meal we sat outside a café in the principal square of the town, smoked, drank coffee, and chatted with various people. As we had to start at daybreak the next morning we turned in early.

CHAPTER II

DAMASCUS

The scenery of the Lebanon range has often been described. Especially beautiful is the view over the Mediterranean from the summit.

We travelled third class and formed a party of eight—the others being Syrian merchants of Damascus. They kept up a ceaseless flow of conversation on every imaginable subject, much of which was lost on me, as I found considerable difficulty in understanding them. We were consoled for the heat and discomfort by the beautiful figs and grapes obtainable at nearly every station, and we ate of them far more than was good for us. The first-class carriages, from what I saw of them, seemed fairly comfortable and almost empty. It seems to be an Eastern peculiarity to economize when travelling. Personally, I have always thought that at no other time does one get such good value for money. It has been said that the enjoyment of wealth consists in its power to raise a golden screen between its possessor and the minor unpleasantnesses of life; on a journey, at any rate it does in some measure succeed in doing so. But I have never met the Oriental who did not regard the bare suggestion of paying a first-class fare or hiring an extra camel with pious horror, though he will readily spend ten times as much on something quite unnecessary which happens to take his fancy.

Damascus is one of the most populous and beautiful cities of the East. It contains miles of covered markets of typically Oriental character. There are said to be a thousand mosques and seventy Turkish baths, though I guarantee neither statement to be correct. The town and surrounding countryside are intersected by numerous running streams, while on the outskirts of the city are

gardens and cultivation extending for a great distance. Fruit and flowers of all kinds attain great perfection, and the dry, calm atmosphere must be very healthy. In summer, though the days are hot, the nights are cool—never sufficiently warm to make sleeping on the roof advisable, as is the custom in Bagdad and the Arabian cities. In winter there is sometimes a heavy snowfall—hence the covered markets. The principal building is the great mosque which stands in the centre of the town and is, I believe, the largest in the world. Prior to the Moslem conquest of Syria it was a church. In the matter of monuments Damascus is rather disappointing and does not compare with Cairo. There are but few of interest, and the general aspect of the houses is mean, though the markets, where most of the merchants live and do business, have a character of their own.

As is usual in the East the town is divided up into the Mohammedan, Jewish, and Christian quarters—the first of course being much the largest and richest. There is one tolerably decent hotel, where Europeans usually stay, and many hostelries for visitors of Eastern race. In one of the latter we installed ourselves, taking one large room. This hotel had been recommended to us by one of our companions in the train, but as it was by no means the best of its sort and rather expensive, we afterwards changed. We took our meals at various cafés. Food is seldom obtainable at hotels in these places.

It was now the twentieth day of Ramadan,* and as we did not propose to start for Medina for about another month, it was worth while making ourselves comfortable. I felt that in view of what was before us the time was none too long for me to get at home with Eastern life to the extent necessary. It was essential that I should have at my fingers' ends certain phrases, quotations, and greetings, with the appropriate answers to them; that I should be able to go through the various Moslem ceremonies, in and out of the mosque, without making mistakes, and get so far accustomed to wearing and arranging my clothes, and doing other things in the

* Generally written, and sometimes pronounced, "Ramazan." The "d" represents the Arabic letter (ض) the pronunciation of which is something like "dhw." The emphasis falls on the last syllable, which is long: thus, "Ramaḍán."

conventional way, that I should not in any ordinary circumstances be conspicuous. It is these multifarious customs and ceremonies that constitute the real obstacle to a European passing himself off as a Mussulman born and bred—for they are common to Islam the world over, and a bad mistake would emphatically give him away. No matter how Eastern his appearance might be, how carefully he might be dressed, and how adept in the language, if after taking a bath some one said to him "Naiman" and he did not know the answer, he would stamp himself for an "Effrengi" as surely as if he walked down the "street that is called strait" in a sun helmet and a spine pad. A bad mistake when praying, visiting a tomb, or even in the responses during a service, might easily be fatal. In fact to pass successfully for any length of time, constant watchfulness as well as previous practice is essential. It is in these matters, and not in the language or disguise, that the real difficulty is experienced. There are nearly as many white men at Mecca as there are men black or brown in colour. Syrian "Arabs" not infrequently have fair hair and blue eyes—as likewise have some of the natives of the holy cities themselves. I was once asked what colour I stained myself for this journey. The question reveals the curious ignorance that lies at the bottom of the so-called race prejudices of which some people are so proud. You might as well black yourself all over to play Hamlet.

It must not be concluded, however, that to travel successfully in disguise it is necessary to be a good actor. The main thing is to keep one's eyes open and one's mouth shut. It is wonderful how easy it is to acquire foreign habits when one is really living in their atmosphere. The secret, I believe, is in playing a part as little as possible consciously, and in trying to identify one's self as closely as may be with the assumed character, in private as well as in public.

It is not practicable to shut one's self up and avoid speaking to any one. If travelling as a respectable person, well dressed, and accompanied by servants, it is impossible to avoid meeting and knowing people, and to some extent accepting and returning hospitality. It

is better to seek this at the outset, after, of course, as much private study as possible, in order more quickly to become accustomed to social conditions. I myself have been much assisted by being naturally very shy with a lot of people—which requires no acting at all, and is quite evidently unassumed. This has enabled me to observe much and say little, and no doubt has accounted for those gaucheries of which I must so often have been guilty.

If the object be simply to visit Mecca, or any other place, in secret, I should say the simplest way of doing it would be to go disguised as a pauper—with £5 in one's pocket, some dirty clothes, and nothing more. If however the expedition is to last any length of time the objections to this are sufficiently obvious, and so far as many interesting sides of life in the country are concerned, the traveller would return very little wiser than he started. Most people would prefer to amuse themselves some other way.

I often congratulated myself on having chosen Damascus for our preliminary sojourn and not Egypt. The chances of detection would be much greater there. The people are more inquisitive and more conversant with the appearance and manners of Europeans than they are in Asia Minor. Also, as they are dark in colour, I should have always appeared a stranger among them, whereas in Damascus, when wearing the local costume as I sometimes did, there was nothing to distinguish me from the people of the country. Sometimes I was mistaken for a "Medanie," *i.e.* a native of Medina, a great many of whom, since the completion of the railway, visit Damascus, especially at this season—shortly before the pilgrimage.

As we were now no longer travelling, there remained no excuse for not fasting. This fast of Ramadan is one of the four positive duties of Islam incumbent on all believers. The sacred law however provides numerous exemptions. You are excused when travelling or engaged in war, and actually forbidden to fast if ill. The Prophet had no sympathy with asceticism. So far as my own observation has extended, this fast is very strictly kept. I am told that in European Turkey there is an increasing laxity observable, but certainly in the

places we visited, in public at any rate, it was not disregarded.

We were of course very careful to avoid giving cause for suspicion by failing to fulfil strictly the religious observances behoving us. Abdul Wahid, it is true, used to gorge himself with macaroons in the privacy of our room undeterred by all we said on the subject, which was a good deal. Even passages from the religious works I was then studying, relating to the fate of those who thus defied the law, more especially of those hypocrites who did so secretly, did not avail to bring him to a better frame of mind. The more we talked of hell and damnation the more he seemed to enjoy the macaroons.

I did not find fasting any particular hardship: not being able to smoke was certainly the chief privation, but as one can do what one likes after sundown, and I used to sleep well into the day, even that did not amount to much. Our routine was somewhat as follows. We awoke about half-past nine, performed our ablutions in the prescribed manner, and read the paper or books till about eleven; then we usually went out. After wandering about the markets for an hour or so we would repair to the great mosque to await the noonday prayer. Masaudi and I, Abdul Wahid having gone off to his lunch, generally remained in the mosque reading or listening to lectures till the afternoon prayer at 3.30. This concluded, we walked back to our hotel, making purchases on the way—cakes, fruit, and so forth—which were to form our "breakfast." Sundown, which begins the day by Mohammedan reckoning, is saluted during this month by a salvo of artillery. After praying the evening prayer, which takes a couple of minutes, the believer can "start in," and usually does. Having taken the edge off our appetites, we would smoke a shisha (water pipe) outside a café, then, a couple of hours later, go to some restaurant for a more substantial meal—then more coffee and pipes, and later on a Turkish bath. Sometimes we went to entertainments of the Café Chantant type; otherwise there were always plenty of bands to listen to—or we might go to some of the quieter cafés, where story-tellers or reading afforded more sober distractions. About one o'clock, or a little later, we had

another meal, eating as much as possible, not because we wanted it but to see us through the ensuing day. Just before dawn a gun is fired as a warning, and another a few minutes later which announces that the fast has begun again.

Business in Damascus goes on as usual during Ramadan. In summer, when the days are long and hot, the deprivation of water must cause some suffering amongst the workpeople, but I believe that a great many who have not manual labour to do rather enjoy this month and are sorry when it is over. There is more going on at night for one thing, and it is a season when special luxuries are cooked in most houses, and various delicacies sold in shops not to be found at other times. Then again every one feels that he has a right to be extravagant.

The day after our arrival we presented to a local merchant a letter of introduction that Abdul Wahid had brought from England. We found his office in one of the principal bazaars, his business being of the wholesale description. On reading the letter he welcomed us warmly, inquired about ourselves and our intentions, and offered us any assistance he could render. We remained about half an hour conversing with him, then, hearing that we wanted to buy a few things, he accompanied us to several shops and introduced us to their proprietors. So numerous and crowded are these bazaars that it is by no means easy to find one's way at first. As is customary in the East each description of trade has its own market or street. There is for instance a silk market, a saddle market, a horse market, and so on. Some of the larger ones consist of more than one street and contain perhaps a hundred shops. Nothing has a fixed price—it is nearly always necessary to bargain. Generally the first offer comes from the customer. Abdul Wahid proved himself a great adept at this. While never giving a farthing more than absolutely necessary, he always managed to keep the other man in a good temper. So independent are these people that at the slightest hint of unpleasantness they will simply tell you to go away and buy your things somewhere else. Very different are they in this respect from Indian traders—of whom there are very few in Damascus. The latter,

rather than lose a customer, will put up with all sorts of abuse, as likewise will the Jews. A fearful waste of time is engendered by this method of doing business, but it seems absolutely engrained in the people and part of the life of the community, though all admit its absurdity and inconvenience.

The mosques of Damascus, principal among them the Ommaya, have been described so often in their historical and architectural aspects that I will confine myself to describing the purposes for which they are actually used. The idea that a mosque is merely a Mohammedan church requires modification.

It will have been gathered from much of the foregoing that Islam is as much a society, as a religion in the common acceptation of the term. There are certain rules binding on its members, as in Freemasonry. Once admitted, none may leave on pain of death. There are certain peculiarities of dress, certain salutations, and distinctive habits, by which members may know each other. Similarly the mosque is less comparable to a church than to a Masonic temple. It is not considered improper to eat or sleep in it, talk on secular subjects, or read any books or papers whatsoever. It serves equally as a refuge for homeless strangers, and a meeting-place for the people of the town; while affording peace and quietness at any time for those desiring it, as the utmost decorum is generally observed. Prayers take place five times daily, at the appropriate hours; which are dawn, noonday, afternoon, sunset, and some two hours after, when it has become quite dark. These prayers are led by an Imam, appointed for the purpose, or by any one who happens to be there, usually one of the elder men of the congregation. In large mosques there are generally half-a-dozen Imams of different sects, and several sets of prayers take place as sufficient people assemble. There is no furniture in a mosque—only carpets and prayer-mats, and a tank or fountain in the courtyard for ablutions. Women usually have a small mosque of their own built on to the larger one: at Medina a portion is railed off for their exclusive use; but at Mecca they pray with the men, occupying one whole side of the quadrangle. Mosques, though of many different designs, are all alike in one way; they are built

with their greatest length at right angles to the direction of Mecca or "Kibla," the only exception being the great mosque at Mecca itself.

It is by no means necessary to go to the mosque to pray, but it is considered more blessed when two or three are gathered together. This may be outside a café, in the anteroom of the hamam, on the march, in camp, or anywhere. Those present appoint an Imam, and assembling in a line behind him, follow him in his prostrations and bows. The Imam repeats the prayers aloud in the morning and evening, at other times to himself. I myself have been several times made "Imam" when the hour of prayer has arrived and no one else looking more worthy of the office has been available.

The Muadhin,* often a blind man, calls the faithful to prayer at the appointed times from the minaret of the mosque. In a large city with many mosques this sound is strangely impressive—especially at dawn. The man employed in looking after the books in the mosque and keeping it clean acts as Muadhin in the absence of any one specially appointed.

Every Friday there is a special service at noon, and also on certain festivals in the morning. At the Friday service a sort of sermon is given by a learned man appointed for the purpose. This, which comes after the prayer, is delivered from a pulpit facing the congregation, known as the "Mimba." The address is the same everywhere for the particular month: it is composed in Mecca and sent out from there to all parts of the Mohammedan world. After this exhortation comes a long prayer for the success of Islam, the conversion of the heathen, etc. It includes a supplication for the long life and health of the "Commander of the Faithful"—at the time we are speaking of, Abdul Hamid. This, of course, is omitted in Sheia mosques, since they do not recognize the Ottoman Sultan as such.†

A rukka consists in a recitation of the first sura ‡

* The "dh" is reduplicated and bears the emphasis thus: "muadh-dhin." Often appears as "Muezzin."

† N.B.—All descriptions of religious ceremonies apply to the Shafei sect more especially.

‡ Sura = chapter.

of the Koran (which corresponds more or less to the Christian's "Lord's Prayer") followed by another sura, usually one of the short ones at the end. Then comes, in the bowing position, an acknowledgment of God's greatness, and the rukka is concluded in the sitting position, by invoking a blessing on the Prophet and Islam generally, with certain other supplications. The prayers consist of a certain number of these rukkas,* the greatest number being four and the least two. At the end comes the telling of beads, of which most people carry a rosary containing ninety-nine, one for each name or attribute of the Deity, after which, holding the hands palms upward, the Moslem may say his private prayers in his own language. A four-rukka prayer takes about eight minutes, or even more when praying with an Imam. These five daily prayers are, strictly speaking, compulsory. It is not, however, absolutely necessary to pray at the hours ordained. If otherwise engaged, prayer may be postponed till it is convenient. Most people pray when they get up, at noon, in the evening, which they combine with the afternoon, and again before going to bed.

Ablutions are of two kinds, according to the state of impurity contracted. The greater necessitates total immersion, the lesser the washing of hands, feet, and face—this latter is generally necessary before prayer, and may be performed in the mosque, which nearly always contains a tank for the purpose.

All these religious performances play so large a part in Oriental (Mohammedan) life that a somewhat full description of them is really unavoidable.

. . . . . .

The remainder of Ramadan passed uneventfully in the manner I have been describing. On the last day, however, a tumult arose in the town which might have had serious consequences. The story of this is worth relating, for it throws a sidelight on the character of the people and their government.

The cause of the disturbance was absurdly trivial. A man belonging to the heretical Wahabi sect was in the great mosque while some people were visiting the tomb of the prophet Yah-Yah, who is supposed to be buried

* Rukka = bow.

there. These "visitations" consist in standing in front of the vault and reciting a long salutation to the deceased. By the Wahabies they are held to be idolatrous. This man started to declaim against the custom, and attracted a considerable audience, one of whom, a Meccan Arab, and a well-known "Aalim" or learned man, put an end to the sermon by hitting the preacher on the head. The Governor of Damascus, who happened to be in the mosque at the time, observing these highly indecorous proceedings, ordered the arrest of the Aalim without troubling to make inquiries. Nothing further happened till evening, when a crowd began to collect in front of the Government offices, which were opposite our hotel, and overlooked the big square. This was in consequence of the afternoon's *émeute*, and the object was to procure the release of the prisoner, on behalf of whom there was much public sympathy. When first the crowd began to assemble, we were under the impression that the new moon had been sighted, which means the end of the fast, and is always an occasion for great rejoicing. Masaudi was ill in bed, but Abdul Wahid and I at once sallied forth to see what might be going on, and so got mixed up in the crowd just as the row began. The mob broke open the door and rushed the building, from the balcony of which a stump orator proceeded to address them. The arrival of several companies of infantry put an end to his speech. The buildings were retaken and the intruders driven out. Attempts were made to disperse the crowd, which continually increased. Reinforcements coming up charged with fixed bayonets, using, however, the butts of their rifles only. The people retaliated with sticks, stones, and anything else that came handy. Several were injured, but no one, so far as I know, seriously. The troops threatened to fire; but fortunately for us, refrained. At midnight, the whole place being in an uproar, the governor gave way, weakly I thought, and released the prisoner, who was carried home in triumph, amid general enthusiasm. We had got rather roughly handled during the scuffle, in which we had been unable to avoid taking part. Early in the proceedings I got a crack on the left shoulder with the business end of a rifle that was extremely painful at the time.

Walking home, we stopped to listen to an elderly Turkish officer who was addressing a small group of townspeople. "If," he said, "this is your idea of liberty, I warn you the constitution cannot last, and we shall lose what we have been at so much pains to get. Before the day of freedom you would never have dared to behave in this way, and to do so now is to show to the whole world that this country is unsuited for free institutions." He went on to point out that the man would have been released the following morning, or in any case as soon as the true story of what happened in the mosque was made known to the authorities.

We heard a great deal about freedom in Damascus. At that time enthusiasm for the new regime was at its height, and my own reactionary views met with no sympathy whatever. The trouble in the Balkans was the cause of much indignation against Austria. A boycott of all Austrian goods was suggested, and in Constantinople was actually carried out. It is my own opinion that elective institutions will never be successful for long in the East, where the character of the people necessitates a strong ruler, who does not owe his position to their caprice.

The end of Ramadan is celebrated by much expenditure of gunpowder and other marks of rejoicing. Every one who can afford to do so wears new clothes. The markets are closed and the town presents the usual bank holiday appearance. The dress of the Syrians is not so picturesque as elsewhere in the East. Most of them wear very wide cotton trousers, a shirt reaching to their knees, and a coloured silk gown which opens in front and folds across. Over this, in cold weather, some wear a long coat of European cut, others the "jubba," a typical Arab garment, rather like a dressing-gown, of any material and colour. On their heads they wear a tarboosh (fez) with a silk cloth wound round it. Strangers usually dress as in their own country, which gives a gayer appearance to the streets—especially near the time of the pilgrimage, when there are many foreigners visiting the city prior to going on to Medina. We found the clothes we had brought too chilly for this climate, and so to some extent adopted the local costume, only that

Abdul Wahid would not let me wear a tarboosh, fearing that I should be mistaken for a Turk—which for various reasons he considered undesirable. I therefore wore a turban and black jubba, and was hence generally credited with coming from the Hedjaz.

On the day of the festival we visited our friend the merchant, Abdullah Waridee, in his house, which was situated in the suburbs, and had a very nice little garden with fountains. The reception-room in Oriental houses is generally a long passage-like apartment, terminating in a raised platform furnished with cushions, on which the master of the house and his guests squat while the retainers stand or sit in the lower portion near the door. We were most hospitably entertained, and stayed, as is customary, for several hours. He returned our call the following day, and thenceforward we became very friendly.

On the second day of the festival we witnessed the departure of the mahmal for Mecca. Prior to the completion of the railway the pilgrim caravan used to start at this date. The journey to Medina took forty days, and meant hardship even to the rich, while the poor people who travelled on foot had a very rough time. The mahmal is an elaborately embroidered camel-litter which, along with other presents from the city, is sent annually to the shrines as a mark of respect. A similar mahmal is sent from Egypt, and formerly there was one from Bagdad also, though of late years this has been discontinued for some reason. A great crowd assembles to see the mahmal off, and it is escorted for some distance by the governor and principal dignitaries *en grande tenue*. The camel that has the honour of carrying it is of great size, and, I believe, of the highest breeding.

A few days after this we made the acquaintance of two brothers, students of Sacred Law at the College of Kerbela, who were going on the pilgrimage. They were rather pleased to meet us, as they knew no one in Damascus, and we went about a good deal together during the rest of our stay. We stood them a dinner and music-hall, and they drove us out to the mosque where Zeinab, the Prophet's daughter, is supposed (erroneously, I believe) to be buried. The drive was pleasant and gave us a

good idea of the extraordinary fertility of the country. Arrived at the mosque, which is quite modern, we performed the proper visitation, which was recited by the elder of the two, Sheikh Hassan by name, who had a very good voice. Then, as there was no one else present, we sat in the mosque and smoked cigarettes, which, by the way, was very wrong of us. We then carved our names on the outside—an abominable practice to which Arabs are peculiarly addicted.

That evening we dined with them at a house they had taken for their stay in Damascus—in which matter I often wished that we had followed their example, instead of going to hotels. It is quite an error to suppose that Eastern food is unpleasant to a European palate, or that it takes long to get accustomed to it. I found it excellent, as a rule—the only fault being that it is generally rather too highly spiced. But then, being more or less teetotallers, Orientals are not much troubled with "liver."

We had intended to travel together to Medina, but this fell through, owing to Sheikh Hassan falling in love. The object of his affections was the daughter of a local merchant, with whom he at once began negotiations, which there was little prospect of concluding before the pilgrimage, and so they decided to postpone the latter. I was surprised that his brother put up with this nonsense, and said as much; however, they were quite decided, and I daresay there was more in it than we ever heard of to account for their sudden change of plan.

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About this time we were compelled to change our hotel, as the one we were in was to be pulled down. We moved into another, but only stayed one night, for good and sufficient reasons. I still want to scratch when I think of it. Our third venture was more successful, though we had to pay slightly more than I had intended. The room we got was however fairly comfortable and quite clean.

It was while staying here that we nearly got let in for a most undesirable addition to the party. Abdul Wahid one day was accosted on the stairs by a middle-aged woman who told him she had come from Aleppo with her two daughters, and was on the pilgrimage. They were

occupying the room below our own in the hotel, and had heard that we were likewise bound for the Hedjaz. As they had no man with them—might they travel with us as far as Medina? Abdul Wahid was, I am sorry to say, sufficiently unscrupulous to say that he would be delighted, but as a matter of form he would have to consult me first. His heart failing him, however, he said nothing to me about it. The next day I was caught in the same way and, panic-stricken, said exactly the same thing about him. "Oh," she said, "your friend is quite willing, he told us so. He is only waiting for your consent." I escaped upstairs and sternly commanded Abdul Wahid to go down at once and get us out of it somehow. I reminded him of what had happened to Ananias in this very city, and assured him that if he tried to shovel it on to me again that person's fate would be enviable compared to his own unpleasant end. Masaudi also expressed astonishment at his hardihood. Abdul Wahid accordingly descended in some trepidation whilst we tip-toed to the edge of the bannisters to hear what he would say. He began by expressing great regret that he would be deprived of the pleasure to which he had so much looked forward, but, alas! there was a third member of the party, a very learned and holy man, who could not bring himself to travel with women except those belonging to his own household. This was received with yells of laughter, from which I gathered that they had already seen Masaudi and tumbled to the true state of the case. Abdul Wahid returned discomfited to confront Masaudi, who in turn was now very angry. We finally agreed that neither honesty nor common decency could reasonably be expected from a man who gorged himself with sweets in Ramadan. The next time we met the ladies Masaudi told them that Abdul Wahid's reputation was so bad that it was as much as any woman's character was worth to be seen talking to him.

As a matter of fact we were in no position to help them, much as we might have liked to do so. Nor would it have been fair to risk involving them in the disaster which must ensue should I be discovered. But I fear our refusal seemed to them rather unkind.

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The time for our departure was now drawing near, and we began to make preparations for the journey. We bought the "Ihram" or white robes that we should require when entering Mecca and during the three days of the actual pilgrimage. We also bought the tent, mats, and saddle-bags which would constitute our camp equipment, knives, forks, plates, and what cooking utensils we required; not forgetting water pipes and a good supply of tea and tobacco. These things can be bought much more cheaply in Damascus than in Medina. I deposited my money, now reduced to £200, with our friend Abdullah, who gave me two cheques, one on his agent at Medina, the other on Mecca. In neither place are there any banks.

We had intended to start on the fifteenth of the month, but had to postpone our departure till the eighteenth owing to the trains being full up with troops sent to reinforce the garrison at Medina, which was reported to be hard pressed. Trouble that had arisen with the Bedou tribes during the Ramadan festival had swelled into a respectable war. Wild and improbable rumours about the desperate nature of the fighting were daily circulating in the town; but as the papers were not allowed to give details, even if they knew any, and the officials were not communicative, it was difficult to get at the truth. All that seemed certain was that the Government troops had sustained a considerable defeat at the outset, and that the city was in a state of siege. This was good news for me, because I felt sure that it would make my journey easier in many ways. In time of war and commotion, when people have much to occupy their minds, they are less apt to be inquisitive. Moreover, I am never averse to being where anything interesting is taking place, and consequently I was all anxiety to be off to the scene of action.

CHAPTER III

THE HEDJAZ RAILWAY

The Hedjaz railway station is situated on the eastern side of the town some little distance out. It took us over an hour to drive there from our hotel. The train was due to start at eleven in the morning—European time—but we were warned not to be later than nine, as it was expected to be very crowded. There are two classes, first and third. Seeing that the journey was to take four days at the least, and we were fairly affluent, I was strongly tempted to travel first class, especially as the difference did not amount to very much. Our Damascus friends however strongly opposed this extravagance. They said that even the "very best people" went third, and that it was nearly as comfortable. I gave up the idea when I found that it would probably involve their putting on a special carriage for me, for I naturally wished to make myself as inconspicuous as possible on arriving. I was thankful afterwards that I allowed myself to be persuaded. Our entry into Medina was quite sufficiently sensational as it was.

We got to the station in good time and secured our places, which we left Masaudi to guard while we took the tickets and registered the luggage. The tickets cost £3 10*s.* each, not a great deal for a journey of over a thousand miles. As we had still two hours and a half to wait, we adjourned to a small café with our friend Abdullah, who had come to see us off. Later I walked back with him some distance towards the town, which opportunity he took to bestow upon me some excellent advice. "Remember," he said, "that the people of the Hedjaz are not civilized as they are here, and do not quarrel, or you will get into trouble. They are accustomed to make money out of the pilgrims, so do not be cheated, yet do not accuse them lightly of trying to rob you. Do not spend too much money at the beginning, as you may

want it all. If you are attacked in the train, or with the caravan, by overwhelming numbers, do not try to fight; give up your things quietly, and no harm will befall you." He further admonished me to be punctual in the performance of prayer while on the pilgrimage, whatever I might be at other times, and to give some small sum in charity before starting. I further had to promise to pray a prayer of two rukkas on his behalf in the Prophet's mosque at Medina. At parting he embraced me affectionately in the objectionable manner customary everywhere but in England.

On returning to the train I found all confusion. The carriages consisted of plain wooden benches with a passage down the middle. These were in pairs facing one another with just room for two to sit on each. We had reserved four of them, but other passengers turning up had forcibly removed our things from two in spite of Masaudi's protests. Our carriage was now absolutely crammed, as likewise were all the others. There was no room for anything, and we were jammed up together with our belongings in a most uncomfortable way. Although we had still an hour to wait, we did not dare to leave again, and sat in our places waiting for the train to start. As it was, many people arriving late were turned away for want of room. When, much to our relief, we did start, we were half an hour late.

Among those in our compartment were several Turkish officers in uniform, some Syrian pilgrims, and some very dirty Moroccans. Next to us on the other side of the carriage were two Turks, father and son, whose only luggage appeared to consist of a gramophone. This ubiquitous instrument is very popular in the Hedjaz, and many Arabic records for it are now to be obtained—among them even passages from the Koran! I have never lost an opportunity of pointing out the impropriety of this, having always entertained a strong objection to this invention of the Evil One.

We travelled through open cultivated country till night fell. The Gebel-esh-sheikh, a fine peak overlooking Damascus, well above the snow-line, was still visible the following morning. In the course of the first day we passed several large stations, but by the morning

of the second we had entered the desert and thence-forward few habitations were visible. The soil was brown and dry, with scanty herbage, which thinned out more and more as the train passed on to the south. We had brought what food we required—mostly hard-boiled eggs, bread, and cakes, but what with the dust and the stuffy atmosphere we could hardly eat anything. Through the night we dozed at intervals, but sleep in our constrained position was difficult. The second day I had a bout of malarial fever, which lasted till we got to Medina and did not enhance my enjoyment of the journey. The kindness of our fellow-passengers in this emergency was remarkable. Seeing that I was ill, they insisted on crowding together so that I could have room to lie down, as often as I would permit them to do so. The Turkish officers, who had a small charcoal brazier, cooked things for me when possible, and gave me fruit, of which we had foolishly lost our own supply. We were able to repay them for this in some measure, as we had a "Primus" stove which made tea in a few minutes whenever any one wanted any.

There was a small closed compartment at the end of the corridor that was occupied by an elderly Turk with his son, wife, and two daughters. I was sorry for the latter, for they were the only women on the train. They spent most of the time intoning what is known as the "Maulid," a poetical work describing the birth of the Prophet.

On the third day we arrived at a station at nine in the morning and did not leave till five in the afternoon. This was owing to the engine driver, who should have taken us on, not being there for some reason. Our own driver said he was dead tired and must have a sleep. As we heard that the track ahead was in a very dangerous condition we made few protests, and in fact were only too glad to get out and stretch our legs. This station, like most of them, consisted merely of a couple of tin huts and a tank. We soon had to take refuge in our carriage from the heat of the sun. The reddish sand of the Arabian and Syrian deserts is not, however, nearly so trying to the eyes in bright sunlight as that of Egypt—nor does the country, being generally hilly, give the same idea of desolation as the Sahara.

The engine driver being at last sufficiently refreshed, we started again. Another long night passed, and we were traversing a country broken up into fantastically shaped hills and covered with huge boulders of weird forms. Some stood straight up on end like huge Cleopatra's Needles. Others reminded me of Stonehenge, and for about an hour we passed through a plain covered as far as the eye could reach with rocks nearly resembling the "toad rock" at Tunbridge Wells. We were now in Arabia, and as we proceeded the aspect of the country became ever wilder. High mountain ranges appeared on either side, and the great pinnacles of rock became more twisted and uncanny in appearance. The track wound through gloomy gorges over which huge rocks hung menacingly. About midday we reached Medain Salih. This is the boundary of the Hedjaz province, and beyond it no one, not being a Mohammedan, is allowed to pass. When the railway was being built all the European engineers were discharged at this point and the work was carried on entirely by Turks and Arabs. This place, which itself is simply a couple of tin shanties, is remarkable for the extraordinary rock dwellings, which from time immemorial have excited the wonder of travellers. These have been well described by the Arabian explorer Doughty and several others. The huge isolated boulders which cover the country are here hollowed out and fashioned into caves with doors, very much like the rock temples of Abu Simbel in Upper Nubia. I was unable to examine them closely, but there are hundreds of them, and they appear to be beautifully made. According to the Arabian story, this place as its name implies, was the town where dwelt the prophet Salih. As related in the Koran, the people of these cities being hard of heart and refusing to listen to his preaching, beside killing his miraculous camel, were finally overwhelmed by a convulsion of nature like that which destroyed the Cities of the Plain on the occasion when Lot's wife came to such an untimely end. "The earthquake overtook them and the morning found them lying dead in their city." *

* Koran, chap. vii.

In the afternoon of this the third day we reached a good-sized village surrounded by date palms—the first habitations we had seen since leaving Syria. Here we stayed for an hour and were able to replenish our provisions and get some coffee. All the stations south of Medain Salih are fortified with trenches and barbed wire, and the whole scene reminds one of South Africa at the time of the war. There was fighting all along here while the railway was in course of construction, and the posts are still occasionally attacked by wandering tribes. We passed several wrecked engines that had run off the track owing to it not having been properly laid, and we were obliged to proceed very carefully. We were told that it was by no means unlikely that we should be attacked between this place and Medina—not by the belligerent tribes, but by bands of marauders whose object was merely robbery. We therefore looked to our weapons on re-starting. We were due to arrive at Medina at noon the next day—Sunday.

Nothing happened during the night, and we were all much cheered by the reflection that it was the last we had to spend in that accursed train. I was also feeling much better, in spite, or perhaps because, of having had no medicine whatever. We were somewhat delayed, and it was not till one o'clock that the dull thudding of distant artillery fire told us that we were approaching our destination. The stations were now protected by considerable earthworks and had garrisons of a company or more. I did not particularly admire either the construction of these defences or the sites chosen for them. A little later, through a gap in the hills, there appeared the needle-like minarets of the Prophet's mosque—then, as we emerged on to the plain, the city itself. One of our Turkish friends, standing with me on the footboard, pointed out several places with familiar names—the Mountain of Uhud, where the forces of the Prophet were defeated by the Koreish, the tomb of his uncle Hamza, and the different gates. As we drew nearer the rattle of musketry fire became audible, and as we steamed into the station I half expected to find a hand-to-hand conflict going on outside the booking office. The fighting however for the moment was on the other side of the town, and the station was not under fire. That morning

however it had been, and consequently the crowd that usually assembles to see the train come in was absent—very fortunately for me as it turned out.

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Another digression is necessary here to explain the causes and conduct of this little war, and how we came to pass in as we did, unmolested by the besiegers.

This part of Arabia being theoretically a province of Turkey, the Arab tribes inhabiting it are nominally Turkish subjects. Turkey being the most powerful Mohammedan country of the present day, her ruler claims the title of "Commander of the Faithful," and on him devolves the guardianship of the sacred cities, and the maintenance of order there. As a matter of fact, however, apart from occupying Mecca and Medina and the coast ports, Turkey has little real authority in the Hedjaz. The Bedou remain, what they always have been, independent tribes, each community having its own country, rulers, laws, and customs. They are an intensely aristocratic race, setting great store by genealogy and noble descent; they despise the rest of the world, not excepting the so-called Arabs of the towns, who are usually of mixed blood, or the other Arabic-speaking peoples, such as the Egyptians and Syrians. It is certain that few other races can boast such pure breeding as the Arabs, or more honourable traditions. The best families have done no manual labour except fighting and brigandage since the creation of Adam.

These Arabs, known generically as the "Bedou," live in the desert; that is to say their country is dry and arid generally, though fertile spots occur. They build no towns, but move from place to place. They despise all civilized customs and appliances—even houses. Their food is of the simplest, their dress a single cotton gown. Their favourite pursuit is war in some good cause, or failing that robbery. They are excellent horsemen and camel masters, very hardy, daring, and resourceful. In character, though brave, generous, and hospitable, they are treacherous and consider things allowable in war that are decidedly not "cricket." They are by no means fanatically religious, contrary to the received idea; they neither fast nor pray, and in reality are only nominal Mohammedans.

The pilgrims consider them savages and have good reason to hate and fear them; so also have the inhabitants of the Arabian towns.

For many years past the Turks have found it less trouble to pay a certain sum of money to the sheikhs of the Bedou tribes through whose country the pilgrim caravans have to pass, in return for immunity from attack, rather than to send large escorts with them. Though it may well be considered undignified for a civilized Government to submit to such extortions in their own country, there is really no help for it. To occupy and police Arabia in such a manner as would make it a safe country for travellers, would be at present about as practicable an undertaking as an invasion of the moon. Neither the Turks nor any one else can hope to accomplish it. The character of the country, difficulty of transport, and scarcity of water would effectually settle a European army, and the Bedou themselves are much more formidable opponents than the half-armed savages we destroyed in such numbers at Omdurman. They are well armed with modern rifles (a good proportion being small bores), and, judging by the amount of firing at long ranges round Medina, they have little trouble in obtaining ammunition. In fact, so far as I could see, no attempt is made to prevent traffic in either rifles or cartridges; they are sold in the open market both in Mecca and Medina.

It is impossible to do more than guess at the number of Bedou Arabs in Arabia—seeing that three-fourths of it is unknown. But I have been told that the Hedjaz tribes alone, were they to combine, could put nearly 100,000 men in the field.

With the completion of the Hedjaz railway * the Turkish Government made a precipitate and, in the circumstances, an ill-advised attempt to stop further payment of tribute for safe conduct to the tribes *en*

* The deposed Sultan, Abdul Hamid, was mainly responsible for this work. Subscriptions in aid of it were raised throughout the whole Moslem world. The railway reached Medina in the year I went there—1908. It is proposed to carry it on to Mecca; but there seems little prospect of this being accomplished for some time to come. The object in building it was in part to render the pilgrimage safer and easier, and in part strategical.

route. This as a matter of fact did not amount to very much, as the part between Syria and Medina never gave the caravans any great trouble. The news however spread through Arabia and alarmed the more important tribes between Medina and Mecca, and Medina and Yembu. If they were not allowed to plunder and not paid to refrain from doing so—they would evidently be in a bad way.

When the first train arrived it was the subject of much curiosity. At first they did not realize its significance. "Can this thing," they asked, "carry as much as a camel?" When, a few days later, they saw it disgorging hundreds of men and tons of baggage, they began to realize that something new had come into their very conservative country and to resent it accordingly. It was fairly obvious that this would soon make camel-travelling a thing of the past; and with it all their profits derived from the hiring-out of the camels, and the tribute they had for so long extorted. Further, they observed with consternation that the train was by no means so easy to "stick up" as they had imagined it would be, and on hearing that it came all the way from Syria in four days, their amazement passed all bounds.

During the ensuing two months their sheikhs no doubt held many anxious consultations. Deputations waited on the governor of Medina to protest against the railway on the ground that it would bring Europeans into the country. The governor was authorized to promise them on the word of the Caliph himself that this should not happen. It was pointed out to them that arrivals by train could be scrutinized much more easily than formerly, in the days of caravans.

The one idea of the Bedou was to stop the railway going any farther. But it was not at all easy for them to find a pretext on which they could reasonably object. The railway had been built and was to be continued by subscription throughout the whole of Islam. Enthusiasm for it ran high; it was regarded as a grand and patriotic undertaking and a triumphant refutation of the charge that the Moslem religion is decadent or lacking in vitality. It had received the blessing of the

religious heads of all sects, and rich and poor alike had contributed their share with equal generosity.

The best thing to do, it seemed to the Bedou, was to pick a quarrel on some other grounds and make things so hot for the Turks that for a time at any rate they would have something better to do than build railways. Opportunities for doing so were not wanting. Four miles East of Medina is situated the tomb of the uncle of Mohammed, Hamza, who fell at the battle of Uhud; a place of pious visitation by all pilgrims. The "Benee Ali" (sons of Ali), a large and important tribe living and cultivating round the city, were charged with the policing of this road, and paid for doing so. At the end of Ramadan two men returning late at night were killed, presumably by robbers. The governor sent a protest to the chiefs of the tribe and demanded payment of a fine. The effect of the answer he received was that they could no longer be responsible for the road and were not going to pay anything. Some further negotiations took place, but their demeanour was so truculent that it became obvious that they were "out for a row." On the 3rd of Shawal * a force of about 1,000 men with a Maxim was sent to disperse a large body of tribesmen that had assembled, and was threatening the town. The Turks, supported by artillery fire from the walls, advanced boldly through the date plantations. Before long however they were completely outflanked by their more mobile enemy, and subjected to a galling fire from all sides. On their attempting to retreat the Bedou charged in their usual impetuous manner, captured the Maxim, killed a hundred men, and drove the rest back into the town in the wildest confusion. Since that day there had been several engagements on a small scale, but no serious fighting. The Turks had abandoned everything but the town itself and two forts lying outside the walls which were strongly garrisoned. Reinforcements from Turkey and Syria were hurried forward, and included several batteries of artillery, which were distributed along the wall.

The Benee Ali on their side proclaimed a sort of holy war against the Turks, and invited all Arabia to assist them. They said they would not harm or interfere with

* The month after Ramadan.

the pilgrims, who should be free to come and go as usual, and to pass through their lines. Their quarrel was with the Government and the Government alone.

The assistance they asked for was soon forthcoming; fresh levies kept arriving from all quarters. For once in a way the tribes seemed in perfect agreement.

At the time of our arrival the Turkish troops in Medina may have mustered 10,000, with twenty guns; the Arabs upwards of 20,000, and were daily increasing.

Medina is situated in an open plain at an altitude of about 3,000 feet above sea-level. On three sides the plain is bounded by mountains, from five to ten miles distant from the town, but to the south the country is open. The city itself in shape is roughly an oval, measuring about a mile at its greater diameter. It really consists of two towns joined together. The older one, which has a separate wall, contains the mosque and most of the dwelling houses and shops; the other is the more modern part, in which are situated most of the public buildings, markets, and barracks. It includes a large open space in which caravans assemble on arrival or before starting. A smaller wall has been built on to the other to protect this quarter. There are several gates, which are named after the places to which the roads issuing from them lead: one, for instance, is called the Bab-esh-Sham or Syrian gate, another the Mecca gate, and so on. Water is supplied by a number of wells, and is plentiful and good in quality. There are date plantations and other cultivation almost completely surrounding the town, and extending for several miles. The railway station lies to the west of the town, about a quarter of a mile from the outer wall. At the time I was there it was not completed, but some substantial stone buildings were then in course of erection, which, by the way, being quite bullet-proof, proved very useful during the fighting. The cemetery known as the Bakeia is on the south side, abutting on to the wall. Here are buried many of the most famous men in the history of Islam, including several relations of the Prophet. During my stay it was almost constantly under fire.

I should put the normal population of Medina, apart from troops and pilgrims, at 30,000 all told. Their

occupations are almost all in connection with the pilgrims, on whom they subsist almost entirely. They work hard for the three months of the pilgrim season, and do nothing the rest of the year. There is a place for every one in the system. The wealthier classes own houses which they let for large sums. The younger men are mostly employed as guides, and are often very generously rewarded for their services. The shopkeepers of course do a roaring trade, and every one, down to the porters and water-carriers, makes a good thing out of the visitors.

These guides, known as "Mutowifeen" (sing. Mutowif), gave me great trouble on entering both Medina and Mecca. Their business is to take charge of every pilgrim wealthy enough to afford the luxury, look after him during his stay, show him the places of interest, and recite for him the appropriate prayers and salutations before the various tombs, etc. The name is derived from the ceremony of walking round the Kaaba at Mecca, which is known as "towaf"* (as nearly as the word can be represented by the Roman characters). For these services there is no fixed tariff—their remuneration depends on the generosity and depth of purse of each individual; but pilgrims usually are disposed to be liberal. For this reason there is great competition to get hold of every well-dressed visitor, especially if he possesses much luggage and is attended by servants. Formerly the arrival of such not infrequently was the cause of squabbles that ended in an appeal to arms. To put a stop to such scandalous proceedings, the Government some years ago started an arrangement by which each country is allotted to a certain number of these Mutowifs (to anglicize the plural), by whom all the pilgrims arriving from it are taken. To each group a sheikh is appointed, who settles any disputes, and to whom the pilgrims may complain if dissatisfied with the conduct of their *ciceroni*. This arrangement works admirably, since the guides appointed to each country naturally study its language and peculiarities, and can consequently make their visitors' stay much more pleasant and in-

* طواف مطوّف should properly be transliterated ṭowáf, muṭowwif; but as many Arabic consonants have sounds that do not exist in English it seems of little use to employ diacritical marks to represent them.

structive than it otherwise would be. But it was very awkward for us!

It was not till we were almost arrived at the station that we heard of this new arrangement, and at once I scented trouble. To go with the Zanzibar guides would never do. I should be forced to associate with every one coming from the African coast, and should be in constant danger of being recognized by some one who had known me in Mombasa, even if I did not get caught out in the language, which was only too probable. It was necessary to decide instantly on some plan that would serve in this emergency. After a hurried consultation we agreed as follows. Abdul Wahid came from Bagdad; I was a "derweish" who had been living there for some time, and Masaudi, who is a black man, was my slave. The term derweish requires explanation. In its strict sense it means a member of certain orders of a semi-monastic description, such as are common in Egypt and the Sudan. It is a title, however, often assumed by people who for some reason do not wish to be identified with any particular nationality. This may be owing to their political convictions, to their having got into trouble in their own country, or to some question of parentage.

As I have related, when the train drew up the station was comparatively empty. A few Mutowifs, recognizable by their peculiar straw caps and brightly-coloured dresses, were waiting for us, however, and at once got into the carriages. As we were the only pilgrims of any consequence from their point of view, they at once asked who we were. We answered as agreed. Some, however, inquired about us among the other passengers, who mentioned Zanzibar. No Zanzibar or Bagdad Mutowif was there, luckily, so we were allowed to collect our luggage and proceed unmolested. This took some little time, and when we were finally ready, the station was almost deserted. We started to walk into the town, followed by the porters carrying our things. We passed through the heavy fortified gate of the outer wall, down the long straight street past the barracks, and reached the big square in front of the inner gate. Halting here, we asked a passer-by if he could recommend us a house—comfortable, clean, and not too expensive. He examined

us attentively, and, apparently satisfied with his scrutiny, said that he himself had a couple of rooms in his house that he would like to let to us if we cared to come and look at them. This we agreed to do, so leaving the baggage and porters in charge of Masaudi, Abdul Wahid and myself followed him through the inner gate and down the narrow winding street leading to the mosque. We turned up an alley to the left, at the end of which was the house. The rooms in question were on the second floor and seemed to me exactly what we wanted. They were clean, light, and well-furnished—at least, the living-room was ;—the other served as bath-room and kitchen combined. We expressed approval, and asked for his terms ; after a little discussion, he agreed to accept £2 for our stay, provided it did not extend beyond the departure of the mahmal for Mecca, which was due to take place in about a month. I was astonished at the small sum asked, and so was Abdul Wahid, but, as will appear presently, there was a reason for all this. It was not indeed for some time afterwards that I fully realized how my guardian angel must have been hustling himself that day. Our good fortune in falling in with this man was quite extraordinary.

Abdul Wahid went off to fetch Masaudi and the luggage, while I remained in the house, the proprietor's son, a boy of about eleven, being sent to keep me company. They returned in a quarter of an hour, bringing disquieting news. Masaudi, left alone, had been surrounded by guides asking who we were, and where we had gone. News of the arrival of Zanzibar pilgrims had spread, and the authorized Mutowifs had come to claim us. Masaudi was angrily denying that he had ever seen Zanzibar, when Abdul Wahid turned up and interfered, pointing out that we were very tired and had just finished a long journey, and that if they had anything to say, they could come round to the house later, when we had had a wash and something to eat. This appeal was successful, temporarily, and they were left in peace. As soon as we were together again, and the porters had been paid and had departed, I was told what had happened. I turned to the owner of the house, who was listening, and "frankly" explained the trouble. I told him I really did come from

Zanzibar, but had been warned not to employ the proper guides or go to their houses, as the guides were thieves, and the houses dirty and overcrowded. I said that I liked his much better, and wanted to study while in Medina, and not be bothered by a lot of people coming in and out all day. What did he advise ?

He said he quite understood, and that it was not unusual for visitors to try to get out of employing their proper guides ; as for that, his son could do all we wanted in their stead, or we could take some one by the day, as we liked. He advised us to say that we all came from Bagdad,* and on hearing that Abdul Wahid had been to Medina before, suggested that he should deny being a pilgrim, and say he had come there to study or on business, and that I had already made an agreement with him to act as my Mutowif. But he warned us that there would be trouble, and that if they got to know I was a Zanzibari, they would have a right to insist on taking me.

This seemed the best plan in the circumstances—at any rate, we could think of nothing better.

During the next two hours, three Mutowifs turned up. Abdul Wahid conducted the conversation, and did it excellently. He made, as usual, so much noise that the other men were unable to get a word in at all, and I don't think, after a few minutes, any of them particularly fancied having him for a tenant. We told the story we had agreed upon. They tried to talk Swahili to Masaudi, but he obviously did not understand a word. Finally, the last retired, convinced that wherever else we came from, it was not Zanzibar. Then the owner of the house came in and smilingly told us that to the best of his belief there were no more. We then had tea.

The proprietor now informed us that he was an Abyssinian, by name Iman, and had come here from Mecca about ten years before. He had married a widow with one child, the boy Ibrahim, whose acquaintance we had already made. He told us that he had a small private income and this house. He let rooms when opportunity

* There are so many Syrians and Bagdadis living in Medina that visitors from those parts have generally friends of their own to show them round, and are allowed consequently to dispense with the services of regular Mutowifs.

offered, but did not get many tenants, as few Abyssinians came to the Hedjaz—most of them being Christians. His true story I heard from him later. He had been captured when a child by Arab slave-raiders and sold in Mecca. Having had the luck to fall into good hands, he had been able to save money and eventually to purchase freedom from his master, on which he had emigrated to Medina.

A tall, dark man of about forty-five years of age, he was always pleasant and cheerful and did his best to make us at home. It is worthy of remark that in the East no odium attaches to a man who has been once a slave, as might be the case in Europe. In history we often find ex-slaves in command of armies, acting as ambassadors, or even on the throne itself.

The Prophet's mosque is known locally as the "Haram," a term which is also applied to the mosque of the Kaaba at Mecca, that of Omar at Jerusalem, and many others. The word in its root form implies unlawfulness; here it means "sanctified," and develops, in the manner peculiar to the Arabic language, into "hareem"—the women's apartments—and so comes to be applied to women themselves.

The mosque is situated about the centre of the inner town, and has three principal entrances. There is an open square in the middle surrounded by a colonnade. The Prophet's tomb is in the left-hand top corner, as seen facing the Kibla, the direction of Mecca. The tomb, which is covered by a dome that appears above the roof of the building, is surrounded by a rectangular iron railing about ten yards by fifteen. Looking through this, a curtain is seen hanging from the roof so as to form a smaller enclosure within. The curtain is green in colour and elaborately embroidered with passages from the Koran. Within this curtained space is the tomb of the Prophet, and those of his disciples, Abu Bakar and Omar, the first two Caliphs. Adjoining this curtain on the north side is another tomb, said to be that of his daughter Fatima, but this last is admittedly of doubtful authenticity, so much so that the salutations to her are read twice over, once here and once in the Bakeia, where some people are of opinion that she was really interred.

When we had finished tea, Iman came to suggest that, if we were sufficiently rested, we should go to the Haram for the Aesha prayer—the last of the day. Ibrahim would show us the way. Abdul Wahid and I went together, leaving Masaudi. On reaching the main street, we turned to the left, and two minutes' walk brought us to the principal gate. It was now dark, and the effect was both curious and impressive. The vista of tall houses, with their peculiar lattice windows overhanging the narrow cobbled street, now gloomy and deserted, ended abruptly in a flight of wide steps leading up to a great arch, through which appeared a prospect of marble columns, blazing arc lights, and hundreds of hanging lamps. As we approached, a sort of confused murmur became audible. We handed our shoes to the gate-keeper and passed in, Ibrahim stepping in front as we did so, and reciting for our benefit the appropriate prayer which we were supposed to repeat after him. I shall not translate any of these recitations. They are very much what one would expect, and, apart from references to Mohammed, would do equally well for Christians visiting the tombs of their saints.

A strange spectacle it is, and one that never fails to impress the new-comer. Scattered about are many in the various postures of prayer, others are reading from the Koran with the low monotonous intonation and swaying motion of the body peculiar to that occupation. Here and there again small groups squat round learned men, listening to their reading or explanation of some religious work. Others converse in lower tones of secular matters, or are engaged with their private correspondence. About the railed enclosure round the tomb stand lines of men, each group being headed by the Mutowif, who declaims the salutation in a loud sing-song voice, which the others follow or attempt to follow in chorus. As many of them do not understand Arabic, the result of this is often ludicrous in the extreme. Many good stories are current of the way the sense is unintentionally perverted ; but to appreciate their humour, it is necessary to know the language.

We moved forward to the " Makam " of the Prophet—that is to say, the place where he used to pray. This is

now fronted by a small elaborately carved arch with many candles at the sides. Here we were directed to pray the two rukkas customary on entering the mosque.* While doing so, we were the objects of much comment on the part of a group of guides standing round. Abdul Wahid they at once identified as a "Bagdadi," but they could not agree about me. Some said "Persian," others "from Bussorah." When we got up they asked us who we were. I said I was a derweish, a wanderer on the face of the earth. One of them tried me in Persian, at which I laughed and shook my head. Then he offered to take us round for a dollar, to which we agreed. As we walked across to the tomb, he told me that he would recite for us a special invocation, which was inoffensive to the prejudices of the Sheia sect. I thanked him, but said I was not a Sheie.† This puzzled him, for he had made up his mind that I was a Persian. The Sheia detest Abu Bakar and Omar, so their names are either left out of the "visitation" altogether, or else they merely say, "Peace be with you, companion of the Apostle." The Sunna, on the other hand, say a long greeting to both.

Until quite recent years, the Sheia heresy was held in such detestation in the holy cities that Persians and others professing it ran considerable danger there, and were not infrequently ill-treated, or even killed. They retaliated by venting their spite in curses on Abu Bakar, Omar, and the others whose memory they have been brought up to hate. Latterly, however, a more reasonable attitude has prevailed on both sides. A Sheie need no longer hide himself like an infidel. He may openly proclaim his opinion, and the guardians of the sanctuary need fear no acts of vandalism on his part. "We cannot bless," is the modern and reasonable view, "but need not curse."

Arrived at the railings, we were directed to peer between the bars. Nothing more is visible than the folds of the green curtain I have described. Then, standing back, our guide repeated the salutation to the Prophet, at the

* Beside the five regular prayers which are compulsory, there are many occasions on which "Sunna," or optional prayers, are enjoined. Such occasions are on entering a mosque, sighting the new moon, giving thanks, when in danger, or thirsty, and many others.

† See note, p. 33, "Bedou."

close of which we repeated the fatiha with upturned palms. Moving round to the south side, we similarly greeted Abu Bakar and Omar, then, on the east side, the Saints buried in the Bakeia, and, lastly, the Prophet's daughter Fatima. The supposed tomb of the last-named is visible, being outside the green curtain, and is decorated with many jewels said to be of great value. Passing round to the north side, and turning our faces once more towards Mecca, we prayed two more rukkas. Opposite the tomb on this side is a slightly raised platform for the exclusive use of the eunuch guardians of the mosque. Twenty or thirty of them are generally to be found squatting there, chatting or reading. Night and day there is always some one on guard.

The call of the Muadhin to prayer was now resounding from the minarets, and the crowd began to drift into lines. Those who had been reading returned their "Korans" * to the library; the lecturers gathered up their books and papers, and any contributions the audience might have made. The Imam having taken his place, we prayed the four rukkas of the Aesha prayer, after which we paid off our guide and walked back to the house.

After partaking of some supper that Masaudi had prepared, we smoked a shisha and prepared to turn in. Our host Iman came to wish us good night, and to ask if we wished to be called at dawn for the morning prayer. This was really rather inconsiderate of him, as we could not very well say no. We accordingly assented, but mentioned that if he did forget about it we should not be seriously angry—a remark that seemed to afford him much amusement. He recommended me to dress like the townspeople as soon as I could get some clothes, as then, he said, no one would bother any more about me. Otherwise I should be continually pestered with questions as to where I came from.

* The term "Koran" means the substance of the sacred work, not the actual book, for which the proper word is "Mashaf." The Koran is about the length of the New Testament. It is written in the very purest Arabic, and for that reason is not readily understood by Arabs of the present day, many of the words being obsolete. Part of it is in rhymed prose. The production of so extraordinary a work by an illiterate man is considered one of the proofs of the Prophet's mission. Islam is divided as to whether the Koran was created or is coeval with the deity himself.

CHAPTER IV

MEDINA

The next morning we woke about 9.30—Iman having unaccountably forgotten to call us at daybreak. We had agreed that it was undesirable that Masaudi and I should be seen about together, for we might meet some one who knew him, and whose attention might thus be attracted to me. Alone, or with Abdul Wahid, I had little fear of being recognized even if I ran across some one who had formerly known me. Masaudi accordingly went off to the Haram accompanied by his chaperon Ibrahim, while Abdul Wahid and I did some shopping. As no ready-made clothes were obtainable, we engaged a tailor, who accompanied us to the market and chose what he considered suitable materials. His proceedings rather amused me. Once engaged, he assumed entire command and chose the colours and materials he thought becoming, without in the least consulting our inclinations. The only time I ventured a remonstrance I was told not to interfere. Having bought what he wanted, we returned to his workshop, where I was duly measured. I ordered two suits, which I got three days later and from that time forward generally wore.

This costume, with slight variations, is the same in all the Hedjaz towns, and is frequently adopted by foreign visitors. It consists of wide cotton trousers, a long shirt reaching to the ankles, a coloured gown, and a sash which holds a dagger of peculiar shape and often a six-shooter as well. Over these is worn a "jubba" with wide sleeves—of any material or colour. In troublous times such as these most people carry swords, either slung under the left armpit over the jubba, or carried in the hand like a walking-stick. As head-covering some,

especially those who have performed the pilgrimage, wear a sort of straw cap worked with coloured silk and wound with a white band : others wear a cotton cap under a cloth fashioned into a turban.

Thus arrayed there was nothing in my appearance to excite remark, nor was I again bothered by the guides except once more as I shall relate.

We prayed in the Haram at midday and spent the afternoon exploring the city. It is all interesting and picturesque. In contrast with most Eastern places, everything has a clean and well-to-do appearance. The business part of the town is practically confined to two long streets, both very narrow. Three weeks later, when the pilgrims had begun to arrive in earnest, it was difficult to make one's way along them. Some of the dwelling houses in the residential quarter are four or five stories high, and have small gardens behind. All are built with the peculiar overhanging lattices which are so characteristic of Eastern houses. These are constructed to command a view of the front door while leaving the observer himself invisible. They are provided with loopholes through which one may have a good look at visitors before opening to them, and discharge at them a blessing or a charge of buckshot as may seem advisable.

On the way back we met an old acquaintance of Abdul Wahid's—a Persian, who had been formerly valet to a friend of his. We badly wanted a cook, for none of us were capable of preparing any more elaborate dish than the boiled eggs on which, with melons, bread, and honey, we had been subsisting. The melons were excellent and very cheap. Unfortunately the dates were over just before we arrived. We agreed with this man that he should cook for us in his own house and bring the food in such a state that it could easily be warmed up : and if satisfactory we promised to engage him for the journey to Mecca. He turned out to be a most accomplished *chef*, and from that time forward we fared very well. I am sure he would have made the fortune of any London restaurant.

The next few days passed uneventfully. I spent a good deal of time in the mosque, where I would find a

comfortable place with my back to a pillar, pretend to read a book, and watch the people. They indeed were a never-failing source of amusement, and every day brought fresh arrivals. A large caravan came in from Yembu bringing crowds of Indians, Javanese, and Chinamen. Every Eastern race might be identified in the motley crowd and every variety of costume, till the whole resembled nothing so much as a fancy-dress ball. In the same line at prayer stand European Turks with their frock-coats and stick-up collars—Anatolians with enormous trousers and fantastic weapons—Arabs from the West, who look as if they were arrayed for burial—the Bedou, with their spears and scimetars—and Indians, who in spite of their being the richest class there, manage as usual to look the most unkempt and the least clean. Then beside there are Persians, Chinese, Javanese, Japanese, Malayans, a dozen different African races, Egyptians, Afghans, Baluchies, Swahilis, and "Arabs" of every description. Representatives of half the races of the globe may be picked out in the mosque any day during the month before the pilgrimage. The kaleidoscopic effect and the babel of tongues may be imagined.

The behaviour of each party as it is brought into the mosque for the first time is an interesting study, and well exemplifies their racial characteristics. The extravagant emotion of the Indians, when they actually see with their own eyes this tomb which they have from childhood been taught to regard with superstitious awe, contrasts with the subdued behaviour of the more phlegmatic Arabs—while the Javanese and Chinamen seem determined to be astonished at nothing. Yet all of them are impressed in their way. Many burst into tears and frantically kiss the railings: I have seen Indians and Afghans fall down apparently unconscious. They seem to be much more affected here than before the Kaaba itself. At Mecca the feeling is one of awe and reverence, here the personal element comes in. The onlooker might fancy they were visiting the tomb of some very dear friend, one whom they had actually known and been intimate with in his lifetime. With frantic interest they listen to their guide as he describes the surroundings. Here is the place where the Prophet

prayed, the pulpit he preached from, the pillar against which he leant—there, looking into the mosque, is the window of Abu Bakar's house, where for long he stayed as a guest, and beyond is the little garden planted by his daughter Fatima. All these marvels may be spurious in a sense, since no traces of the original mosque remain, yet the place itself must at least be genuine, and this idea detracts in no wise from the pilgrim's appreciation of them.

What must be the thoughts, I often reflected, of the pilgrims from countries now under foreign domination where Islam exists more or less on sufferance, its creed derided by the governing classes, its law tampered with when it does not happen to fit in with the ruler's notions of civilization? Here in the Prophet's own city are at least all the outward signs of worldly wealth and power. The Moslem standard floats over its imposing fortresses. Rows of cannon protect its gates. The law of the Koran holds good within, unchanged in a thousand years, and none but believers may even enter the sacred territory. The splendour of the Mosque itself suggests the bygone glories of their empire.

The guns are obsolete—a 4·7 would soon convert the walls into a dust-heap—and the mosque is inferior to many others, but that is neither here nor there. The illusion remains, and no doubt brings visions to many of the time when the Caliph ruled the civilized world, and to all the hope that better days may yet dawn.

. . . . . .

Masaudi had engaged a man to recite the Koran—a pious act in memory of his dead father. He was, as is usual, a blind man who earned his living in this way. Astonishing as it may seem, a great many people know the whole book by heart, and will repeat it without making a single mistake or missing a syllable. Blindness unfortunately is very common in this part of the East, and every endeavour is made by charitable people to find occupation for those so afflicted. As a matter of fact in the Hedjaz blind men, and in fact beggars of all sorts, have a very good time. Charity, called one of the four pillars of Islam, is considered especially blessed when practised on the pilgrimage. I have seen people

throw about handfuls of silver when leaving the mosque. Many of the beggars, however, are impostors of the worst kind, and should be suppressed. In Mecca afterwards I talked to a blind man who told me he had lost his sight ten years before, after a bad attack of ophthalmia. He had at once begun to learn the Koran, and in two years had been able to repeat it perfectly. The first three chapters were the real difficulty, he said—after that the rest came comparatively easily.

I inquired once whether one could get leave to pass within the railing around the tomb, but learnt that only the Benee Hashim, that is to say the descendants of Ali and Fatima, and the eunuchs in charge were permitted to do so. Not that any one who did get inside would be any nearer a solution of the mystery that lies behind the veil, for to raise the curtain unobserved would be quite impracticable, and to be seen doing so would of course mean instant destruction. Some have expressed doubts as to whether Mohammed is really buried there at all. Without pretending to sift the evidence said to support the view that he is not, I think it to the last degree unlikely that there is anything in it. The Prophet lived to see his religion supreme in Arabia, and at his death was practically an emperor. It is inconceivable that his grave could have been forgotten in a place like Medina, which has always been a bulwark of the faith.

There is a legend that many years ago two Europeans penetrated in disguise into the city, and attempted to tunnel through from their house into the mausoleum. They were discovered and crucified. (This and other stories are often quoted to justify the great precaution taken in the reception of converts of Western origin.) I have been asked what would happen to a disguised European who had the misfortune to be unmasked here or in Mecca. It is generally believed by the inhabitants themselves that the authorities have instructions to put to death any one so discovered without applying to Stamboul for confirmation. There is probably no foundation in fact for this belief, though it is just the sort of order that would be given in Turkey. The local authorities, if informed quietly, would most likely try to get the intruder out of the country safely—certainly

they would try to do so in the case of an Englishman.* If the identity of the visitor became revealed to his Mutowif it would be merely a question of "how much." You can bribe anybody to do anything in Arabian towns. If discovered by the townspeople in Mecca outside the pilgrimage season it is doubtful if anything very much would happen, except that the traveller would have to leave in a hurry. At Medina I fancy they are rather more fanatical on this point, for the shrine owes to its supposed exclusiveness much of its value in Moslem estimation. Also it is not so easy to get away from as Mecca.

But all the Sultan's horses and all the Sultan's men would not avail to save one who became known for a disguised "Effrengi" † in either place from the wild fury of the pilgrim mob at this season. A quick passage to a better world by a sword-thrust or bullet would probably be the best that could befall him, for a much more unpleasant end might well be feared. The only chance in such an emergency would be to repeat the Moslem profession of faith and endeavour to take refuge in the house of some influential person, such as the Shareef of Mecca.

It occasionally happens that Moslems of irreproachable antecedents are accused of being disguised Christians. The Turkish officer who took some of the photographs that appear in this book came near losing his life at the hands of some Magribi Arabs on the Day of Arafat: and I heard of a Russian pilgrim who, though he was, and his family had been, Moslem for generations, was saved with difficulty by the Turkish authorities at Yembu from an angry crowd excited by a peculiar form of headgear he was wearing, which resembled a European hat.

We had tried several times to visit the Bakeia, the cemetery outside the wall, where many of the most famous people in Mohammedan history lie buried. The gate however was kept locked owing to its being exposed to the enemy's fire, and for long we could not get in. At the beginning of the siege there had been several casualties

* This was written in 1909. To-day I am not so sure.

† This term, which is merely a corruption of "français," is applied to Western Christians.

there, and the Government had decided to close it for the time being. Since the day of our arrival no further operations had been undertaken by either side, and nothing but an occasional cannon shot from the walls proclaimed that anything out of the ordinary was taking place.

Our friend Abdullah of Damascus had given us some introductions, and Abdul Wahid met some friends from Aleppo with whom we exchanged visits. The weather had turned very cold and many people were hoping that the Bedou camped round the town would get tired of it and go home—especially as many of them came from the warmer South. The same enthusiasm for the constitution was to be found here as in Damascus, but in a less degree. Arab and Turk alike seemed to have got parliamentarianism and Liberal principles on the brain. My dislike for both was regarded as hopelessly old-fashioned and reactionary. I am afraid I managed to give the impression that Zanzibar is in a sadly backward state, or that I myself am peculiarly stupid. Not to know a word of any European language is to be held very ignorant even in Medina. Most people of the class with whom we associated had at any rate a smattering of French and sometimes of English too. I was careful never to know anything.

England and the English were in high favour everywhere, other European countries being nowhere in comparison. This was partly in consequence of our attitude in the then recent imbroglio with Austria over the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, but was due still more to a genuine admiration and respect for British institutions and methods.*

There are several cafés in Medina, and in them we used to sit and smoke of an evening. They are however dirty and generally bad compared with those of Damascus. Any one starting a decent hotel and restaurant here would make his fortune. Another excellent speculation would be a cold-storage depot. Meat is rather expensive and fish of course unobtainable. In the shops many European food-stuffs are sold. It seems strange to see the advertisements of such things as Cadbury's Chocolate

* This unfortunately no longer holds good, for our influence has since been muddled away. To-day for England we must read Germany.

and Huntley and Palmer's biscuits in such surroundings.

I searched long to find something characteristic of the place to take away as a souvenir, but nothing of the sort was to be had. There are no industries, and no books are printed there. I bought some rather curious stones, known technically I believe as graphic granite, which were said to be found only at a certain hill in the neighbourhood.* On returning to Egypt I found precisely the same stones being sold in Cairo at about half the price. Many other pilgrims apparently got "had" in the same way. Abdul Wahid got let in over some manuscript books he bought at an extravagant price, in hopes of selling them in Europe at a still more extravagant profit. One of these, in Cufic characters, was supposed to have been written in the time of the Prophet, which of course would have made it of great value. One day while amusing myself by endeavouring to decipher some of it I came on a reference to a man who had lived many hundred years later, and concluded that the man who had sold it to Abdul Wahid was by no means so big a fool as the latter had supposed him.

We made friends with the sheikh in charge of the beautiful library attached to the Haram. I visited him there several times and was shown many interesting works of undoubted authenticity. This library, though small, is very well kept and luxuriously furnished. Admittance is free, but the books may not be taken away.

There are two "Turkish baths" in the town—both bad, and at this season fearfully overcrowded. These contrasts are found everywhere. Dirt and meanness alternate with extravagant luxury. Considering how very particular these people are about personal cleanliness, it is extraordinary that they should put up with such vile accommodation as is to be found in the baths both here and in Mecca.

The climate of Medina at this time of year is quite delightful. The air in the daytime is warm but very bracing, and at night it is quite cold. We always slept with at least two blankets. The great majority of the pilgrims cannot afford houses, and camp out in any open

* They come from the Yemen, as a matter of fact.

space they can find—most of them in the big square between the two sections of the town. Those from the South suffer much from cold, which doubtless accounts for the somewhat high mortality amongst them.

We had been living thus quietly for about a fortnight when the trouble with the Bedou began again to assume serious proportions. So quiet had they been since our arrival, that people began to think it was all over, and some owning houses and gardens outside the defences foolishly attempted to visit their property. They paid for their temerity with their lives. The following morning we were roused at daybreak by heavy rifle-fire to the south of the town, and learned that the Bedou had driven in the outposts in that direction and were firing on the defences. After breakfast Abdul Wahid and I went down to the gate leading to the Bakeia and found it locked and guarded. We asked the officer in charge if we might go up on the wall to see what was going on. He made no objection, merely warning us not to expose ourselves. We ascended and walked along the parapet till we came to a gun-embrasure, which commanded a good view of the proceedings, being at the south-west corner near the junction of the two walls. Here we found a gun about the size of a 12-pounder, firing black powder; it was manned by half-a-dozen men under a young officer. Along with them, comfortably under cover, were a couple of eunuchs, who, like ourselves, had come to see the fun. In front of us was open ground, extending for perhaps a thousand yards, dotted with graves and one or two ruined walls, beyond which the dense plantations of date-palms began. Half-way across, and rather to the right, one of these walls had been put in a "defensible condition," and was held by some fifty riflemen, who were blazing away merrily at nothing in particular. Along the dark line of trees beyond, scattered puffs of smoke indicated the enemy's position. A few odd bullets whistled overhead or plumped harmlessly into the wall. Our gun fired an occasional round of common shell at the smoke where it appeared thickest.

Taking up a position where we could see well without exposing more of our persons than was absolutely necessary, we spent the morning smoking and talking with

the men. The officer, unfortunately, did not speak Arabic, but Abdul Wahid managed to get rid of a lot of his bad Turkish. At midday, as nothing more seemed likely to happen, we adjourned to the mosque for prayer and then to lunch. That evening news arrived that several regiments of the best troops in the army, armed with rifles of the latest pattern, were on their way from Constantinople. They were accompanied by a Pasha of considerable renown in war, who was to take over the command at Medina. The Government apparently had come to the conclusion that something must be done to put an end to the present scandalous state of affairs.

The intelligence that he was about to be superseded seems to have roused the governor to energetic measures on his own account. Since the disastrous affair at the outset of the operations he had contented himself with a purely passive defence—hoping, no doubt, that cold, hunger, and internal squabbles would disperse the Bedou hordes without further bloodshed. He now determined to do something startling during the few days of authority remaining to him, and as a preliminary decided to undertake that operation of war known as a "reconnaissance in force"—in other words, to drive in the enemy's advanced posts with a view to discovering where their main body was located and what it was doing. This, if I remember rightly, was stated in "Combined Training" to be an unsatisfactory and dangerous method of obtaining information, only permissible in very special circumstances; and so, indeed, it proved in this case.

The town is surrounded by date-plantations on three sides; to the west, however, the country is more or less open, rising gently for some distance, then broken up into low foot-hills, with scattered groves of date-palms. This open ground was commanded by the artillery placed on the walls and by the detached fort north-west of the town. On the following day at daybreak a force of about four thousand men was advanced in widely extended order. It soon encountered opposition, and by ten o'clock firing had become general all along the line. Warned by this that something was taking place, we went down to the Bakeia gate, intending to resume our former position. To my disappointment we were refused per-

mission to ascend. We retired perforce, but after lunch, the sounds of the conflict in progress becoming too tantalizing, I insisted on trying again. Once more we were told it was out of the question ; but this time I did not intend to take a refusal. We made a movement to go up the steps and the sentry presented his gun. We came down and began to argue with him. The officer in charge came out and told us we were fools. He said the whole face of the defences on that side was under fire. We swore we would be very careful and keep under cover, if he would let us go. He maintained that his orders were strict and that it was impossible. While continuing the discussion we gradually ascended the stairway step by step till, coming to a bend, we doubled round and disappeared. I fully expected to be followed and ignominiously brought back ; but apparently they had given us up as hopeless lunatics who had better be allowed to go and get shot if they really wanted to. Arrived at the top, we rapidly made our way along the wall to our old position, but found that the gun had been moved. Continuing our circuit of the wall we came upon it farther along, protecting the left flank of the line, and with it our old friends under a new officer. We were here very well situated to see what was going on without any particular risk, and we found about half-a-dozen Mutowifs and some eunuchs thus engaged. The latter are privileged people in Medina, and are treated with great respect, while the Medanis are not accustomed to being dictated to in their own town, which accounted for their being there in defiance of orders.

The rifles used by both sides, as well as nearly all the guns, fired black powder, and the progress of the engagement could therefore be traced much more easily than is usual in modern warfare. In South Africa it was generally very difficult to get a correct idea of the position and movements of the opposing forces at any distance from the scene of action. Here however the long lines of smoke indicated their respective positions clearly as though marked on a map.

When we arrived the Turkish troops had advanced about three miles across the open plain and were engaged with the Bedou holding the scattered kopjes and groves

beyond. The former seemed to be firing volleys and using a lot of ammunition, the latter merely sniping as opportunity offered. The artillery maintained a desultory bombardment, and seemed to me to be making rather good practice. Percussion shrapnel and common shell were employed—I never saw a time fuse. Some distance to our right was placed a pair of guns firing smokeless powder. I had no opportunity of examining these at close quarters, but they were evidently pieces of some size.

It was difficult to see what good purpose these operations were expected to serve. Shell-fire at such ranges could hardly be effective, and it did not seem intended to push home the attack. Some of us suggested that the only way to secure any decisive result would be to advance into the date plantations, drive the enemy out, and occupy permanently the ground beyond. The officer in charge remarked that such was the general opinion, but unfortunately no one seemed very keen on doing it. In point of fact, the troops were mostly raw conscripts, and no match for the enemy at anything like close quarters.

We remained here for several hours, during which no perceptible advance was made, firing an occasional round at any parties that appeared in range. We knocked down some date-trees, but I don't think anything else was much the worse for it. Abdul Wahid and the eunuchs, who of course knew all about it, treated us to long dissertations on tactics and strategy generally, and the present campaign in particular—if it may be dignified by such a name. I began to wonder what would happen when they retired, which, obviously, they would have to do soon. It seemed most unlikely that they would be allowed to do so unmolested, taking into consideration the known character of the enemy and the nature of the ground.

Thinking that we should get a better view from the gate facing the station, we climbed down the front of the wall, which was here somewhat broken, and walked along till we came to a side gate, by which we entered the town ; then we cut across till we struck the main street leading to the station. We found the great gate open and a large crowd of people assembled there watching. The

half-finished buildings had been roughly fortified and were strongly held, as also was the gate itself and wall adjoining. A couple of guns had been mounted over the former. Seeing by their dress that a small group sitting on a bit of rising ground about a quarter of a mile beyond were civilians, I saw no objection to going forward and joining them. Just outside the gate, between it and the station, were several small cafés where many people were sitting. We found the group to be five Mutowifs, who told us they had been there since the morning. They were not favourably impressed by the conduct of the operations ; nothing had been done, they said, and a stream of killed and wounded men had been passing all day. We ourselves had encountered four on the way out. One of these men, who was armed with a rifle, told us he belonged to the local volunteers, but had overslept himself and had been left behind that morning. These volunteers had been raised some days before from among the townspeople, and rifles had been issued to them. They were supposed to help in guarding the walls at night and during the day to hold any ground that it was considered ought to be occupied. The idea was to keep them as far as possible from actual contact with the enemy—owing to the peculiar state of affairs I have already described. They were given no uniforms, and they refused to alter in any way their usual attire, which, though picturesque and comfortable, is not adapted for campaigning. The Medina town guard going into action resembled a crocus bed in April, and I should say was about as easy to hit. I asked whether they would accept me as a recruit, and was told there would be no objection. Our friend offered to take me round and introduce me to the sheikh of his quarter the following day—in spite of Abdul Wahid's indignant remonstrances.

It was now past five o'clock, and the retirement had commenced some time before. So far as we could see the troops were retreating in good order and in the conventional way—sections of the line doubling back, then turning to protect by their fire the retreat of the remainder.

When the line was within half a mile of us we began to think it time to get back ; but so well ordered did all appear that there seemed no particular hurry. Suddenly

we saw a wild commotion among the people outside the cafés, who had sprung to their feet and were crowding back through the gate. A man sitting there drinking his coffee had been shot through the head and killed instantly. Almost simultaneously the regular sound of volleys changed to the rattle of independent firing, mingled with the peculiar double reports that rifles make when fired at you, and the swishing of bullets overhead. At the same time the men holding the station buildings were seen rushing to their places.

It became obvious that our present position was too warm to be comfortable. We started therefore to go back, but had not reached the gate before the firing swelled suddenly to a roar. Looking back we saw that the troops were now fairly running for it. The rising ground behind was alive with puffs of smoke, and while we hesitated a crowd of men on camels and horses came galloping over the sky-line blazing off their guns and yelling furiously. The wildest panic now prevailed among the crowd still trying to get through the gate. Several were hit, others were injured in the crush. The guns over the gate were firing case—or, more probably, reversed shrapnel—and this, with the musketry from the wall and other defences, stayed the rout and stopped the Bedoui charge, while giving the defeated troops time to reform. With the exception of the man with the rifle, who bravely stayed behind to take his share in the fight, we ourselves took advantage of a lull that followed to get back through the gate, which was now clear.

Within the gates there was a scene of great confusion. Orderlies were galloping hither and thither, bugles were sounding the "alarm" and "fall in at the double." The crash of musketry and roar of the cannonade were drowned, as we passed through, in the tremendous concussion of the two pieces fired almost immediately over our heads, which smothered us in dust and smoke. A regiment with fixed bayonets doubled past us and deployed before the gate. It was getting quite exciting.

Few pilgrims were to be seen, for most of them had had the sense to go home and leave the Medanis, the Turks, and the Bedou to settle their own differences. Such of the townspeople as had rifles, however, were hurrying up

to bear a hand in the defence. It was the general impression that the Bedou meant to storm the town.

Night was now fast coming on. The enemy made no further attempt to charge, but contented themselves with rifle fire at as close quarters as they could attain. A little hand-to-hand fighting occurred in some places, as we heard afterwards.

When darkness brought comparative safety the killed and wounded, as many of them as could be collected, were brought in. The casualties on our side were evidently not inconsiderable, and the '74 Mauser makes nasty wounds at close quarters. Of course we only retrieved those who had fallen near the gate. Among them were several of the volunteer "town guard."

I hold no brief for the people of Medina, and was till then rather inclined to share the Bedoui view of them. But nothing in their behaviour in this emergency could be held to justify the charge of effeminacy or squeamishness at the sight of bloodshed. The old fighting spirit though atrophied was evidently by no means dead. Anger and desire for revenge seemed the dominating emotion in those around me, and many proposed a general sally to see if we could not get to handgrips with the enemy.

When it became quite dark and the prospect of an immediate assault was over, the best thing to do seemed to be to go home. Abdul Wahid, who said he objected to all bloodshed, particularly his own, on general principles, had gone off some time before. On the way back I encountered Masaudi fully arrayed for battle ; he had been looking for me in various likely places and had feared that I might be still outside the gate. We returned together to the house to find our host and Abdul Wahid preparing supper.

Iman left us afterwards to help man the wall, as every respectable householder was doing that night. Masaudi and I offered to accompany him, but having no rifles allowed ourselves to be dissuaded. Being very tired, I slept peacefully in spite of the cannonade which continued through the night.

In the morning we found that the Bedou had drawn off and resumed their former sniping of the defences at

long range. They had, of course, removed their thousands of killed and wounded. The enemy always do. Three prisoners were all we had to show for the operations of the previous day. These were beheaded, and their heads stuck up over the Damascus gate as a warning to all who should dare to defy the majesty of the Sultan's Government. Unfortunately, even had the rebels been furnished with powerful glasses, they could scarcely have recognized them, and as no one else seemed to take much interest in the trophy, they were taken down and buried in the Market Square, the ground being then defiled by the "street arabs," who were hugely enjoying the whole affair. This last proceeding struck me as childish and rather insanitary. I remarked as much to another bystander, who said, "Very true, but it will annoy the Bedou when they hear about it." Thus far I agree with him—that if in war any measures which serve that purpose, short of actual treachery, were considered allowable, it would be much more satisfactory in the long run.

Whatever may or may not have been the Bedou losses, on this occasion there was unfortunately no doubt whatever about our own—though I was never able to get at the exact figure. Estimates varied from a hundred to a thousand. I should put them at two hundred at a rough guess, and there would be a very high proportion of killed, for all the wounded left on the field were murdered during the night.

So far from any discouragement being evident in consequence of these events, there was now a regular fever for recruiting among the inhabitants. Every one volunteered and most were given arms, for the authorities were by now thoroughly alarmed for the safety of the town itself. The pilgrims of course stood aloof. This quarrel was no concern of theirs. The Mutowifs however began to assume a very warlike appearance—bandoliers, bayonets, pistols, and daggers being fastened about their persons wherever there was room. The volunteers made some sallies on their own account during the next few days, and were several times engaged, when I am told they fought very well. Such at any rate was their own opinion.

Masaudi and I were unwilling to be left out. In vain Iman protested that we were in no way concerned in the trouble and foolish to involve ourselves in it. Having by this time made fairly certain that there was no one in Medina who knew us both by sight, I was no longer nervous of being seen about with him. We asked various people what we ought to do in order to enlist, but as few other pilgrims were doing so, no one knew to whom we should apply. Eventually we ran across one of the Turkish officers who had travelled with us from Damascus and asked his help. Hearing what we wanted, he took us round to headquarters and managed to procure for us an interview with the Staff officer charged with the enlistment of volunteers. This latter was sympathetic and rather amused, but regretted that he could do nothing as strict orders had recently been issued prohibiting the acceptance of any volunteers from among the pilgrims, who were to be prevented as far as was possible from taking part in the fighting. The reason for this was obvious. If pilgrims were allowed to take part in the operations the Bedou would have a reasonable excuse for regarding them as belligerents, and might begin by holding up the train or caravans. The Turkish Government is very anxious to appear before the rest of Islam as the effective authority and guarantee for peace and safety of life in Arabia, and the protector of the pilgrims during their stay there. It would be a serious scandal if not only were large numbers of pilgrims prevented from reaching Medina at all, but many of those that did get there were killed or wounded. The survivors would be likely to take home with them an unflattering opinion as to the capacity of the Sultan to be guardian of the holy places.

In any case he would not do what we wanted : which was, that he should give us a letter to one of the sheikhs of the quarters, directing him to enrol us. He said, however, that we need not take it to heart, for negotiations had that morning been re-opened, and in all probability there would be no more fighting. With this we had to be content.

These negotiations were actually started, but came to nothing. The Bedou demands were out of all reason,

and after their last success the arrogance of their chiefs was said to be unbearable. However, no further fighting of a sensational nature took place during our stay in Medina. The enemy confined their activities to sniping at the walls and the Turks to artillery fire and the occupation during the day of commanding ground in the vicinity of the town.

Some days later the new governor arrived, together with a couple of regiments and some more guns. We watched them detrain and I was struck by their smartness and soldierlike appearance—very different from the troops we had hitherto encountered. They were armed with the ·256 Mauser and sword bayonets.

The next week passed uneventfully, but for a squabble with a certain Mutowif named Hamza, a young Kurd of well-to-do parents, whose speciality was Persia, and who usually conducted a good-sized party of visitors from that country during the season. His father kept, I believe, a very nice house for their accommodation.

The Persian, I must explain, has in Oriental countries the same reputation as the Englishman on the Continent. He is supposed to be always a millionaire, and to pay double for everything. Partly for this reason, and partly owing to the Sunna and Sheia controversy, which still causes occasional unpleasantness, it is not very unusual for Persians to pretend to be Arabs during their stay in these places. Hamza and his father kept a bookshop in the street leading to the Haram, at which I had several times made small purchases. For some reason they got it into their heads that I was a Persian, and that Abdul Wahid by acting as my guide was robbing them of their lawful perquisites. Hamza was always bothering me about this whenever we met, and talking to me in Persian. In vain I assured him that I did not understand a single word. One day when passing their shop, very foolishly and by way of a joke, I called out the Persian greeting "Khuda ha'fiz," the only two words I knew. My pronunciation must have been unexpectedly good, for from that moment nothing would convince them that they were wrong in their original surmise. It so happened that in consequence of troubles in Persia itself, the quarrel with the Bedou, and the fearful outbreak of

cholera the year before, very few Persians had come to the pilgrimage, and Hamza had got no one at all. This of course made him all the more annoyed at being, as he considered, defrauded. As a matter of fact I rather liked him, and would gladly have stayed with them had it been possible. One day he stopped Abdul Wahid in the street and began violently abusing him. The latter told him to go to blazes. After this he and his father were constantly pointing me out to people, and otherwise making themselves objectionable, and me conspicuous, in a manner that obviously had to be stopped.

After consultation Abdul Wahid and I decided to take the bull by the horns. We went down to their shop and talked to them. I said my visit was being spoilt by this continual pestering about belonging to a country I had never been to in my life, and about a language of which I knew no more than they had heard. I said I was going straight to the Sheikh of the Haram to complain, and to him I should show my passport : but where I came from was no business of theirs ! With that we walked off, apparently to carry out what I had threatened. As we anticipated they at once knuckled under. Hamza ran after us, apologized profusely, and implored me to return. When I at last consented, his father also explained that they had meant no harm, and if I really assured them I was not a Persian they of course accepted my statement—and so on. Had I done as I said, Hamza, as he well knew, would have got into serious trouble. The sheikh was not the sort of man to put up with any nonsense, and it pays the authorities to supervise these guides and give ear to complaints concerning them. In my own case of course the threat to complain was merely bluff.

We eventually made it up, and I promised to let Hamza take us round some day to the Bakeia and the other places, as soon as it was possible to get there.

We were able to do so a few days later. No fighting had occurred on that side of the town lately, and in response to many urgent requests the gates of the cemetery were at last thrown open. Hamza came for us after lunch and we visited with him all the tombs there. A description of them would be tedious. The

outstanding feature of them all is the " shoddy " character of the buildings and state of neglect in which they are allowed to remain. This is indeed surprising when one reflects on the millions that have been spent on religious edifices in other Moslem countries—the magnificent mosques of Cairo and Damascus, the golden spires of Kerbela, and the profuse extravagance that Indian travellers describe. Yet here, in the very birthplace of the religion, the tombs of the Prophet's wives, Ibrahim his infant son, Hassan his grandson, and many others whose names are never mentioned without a blessing, are very inferior in size and beauty, and kept in worse repair than many private vaults in other places. I can offer no explanation of this anomaly.

We found Hamza a very good guide. He recited the various " Ziyarahs " * for us with good voice and pronunciation, and was able to answer every question we put to him. He had an annoying and intermittent stammer in conversation.

We were not allowed to enter the tombs of any of the women, for they were " occupied " by female guardians who had established themselves there to prevent such impropriety. By them we were compelled to perform our visitations standing outside. The whole round took several hours.

The following day Hamza took us to some places of interest on the other side of the town—among them the tomb of Abdullah—the Prophet's father. There is a difficulty here which has caused some trouble to the Moslem doctors. Seeing that Abdullah died when the Prophet was a child, obviously he could not have been a Moslem—and he was in fact an idolater. Ought he therefore to be treated as a saint ? Hamza told us that the real truth was that the Prophet had prayed one night that his father might be saved. On the instant he stood before him alive, repeated the creed, accepted his son's religion as the one true faith, and returned to his tomb. Mohammedans, by the way, believe that everything must die before the Day of Judgment, including even the Angel of Death himself. Nothing in the present universe is permanent, except the deity.

* Recitations on visiting a tomb.

We told Hamza that this very indigestible bit of information was a little more than we could comfortably absorb. He replied that he did not believe it himself, but that it was a pretty story, got over the above difficulty, and could not at any rate be disproved. Therefore why bother? His comments often displayed a certain philosophy, and were not infrequently rather witty.

We went on to see the remains of the celebrated trench dug by the Prophet's followers for the defence of the town during his war with the Koreish. Most people profess to be very sceptical about this, but like Hamza, I see no particular reason for disbelieving in it. It is unlikely that the site of so memorable a work would be forgotten.

Another day we visited two small mosques about a mile from the northern gate. Here we ran some risk of attracting some hostile marksman's undesirable attentions, but nothing happened. In one of these mosques is buried a cousin of the Prophet, whose name I have forgotten; in the other he used to pray the evening prayer after watching coursing matches, an amusement to which he was apparently much addicted. Mohammed may add to his other distinctions that of being the only prophet who was anything of a sportsman—and in the best sense of the word, for he strictly prohibited all gambling on the results of the races.

Hamza was much addicted to blacking the inside of his eyelids with "kohl," a form of powdered antimony, which was a favourite trick among the Arabs even before the time of the Prophet, who himself is said to have used it.* They say it is an excellent preservative of the sight and preventive of ophthalmia. I tried it several times myself, but eventually came to the conclusion I was looking too much like a chorus girl. Abdul Wahid applied an enormous quantity and nearly blinded himself. He then tried to wash it out with a sponge, and thereby coloured the whole of his face a bright purple, which he spent the rest of the day trying to scrape off with a piece

* Mohammed is related to have said that the "kohl stick" is one of the three things a man should refuse to lend to his friend; the others being his toothbrush and his wife. The origin of this little joke no doubt dates back to high antiquity.

of bath brick with only partial success, as the stuff sticks like death.

We had now been three weeks in Medina and began to think of moving on. We had originally intended to travel to Mecca with the Syrian mahmal, or, in case we got tired of it before, with any caravan that might be going. In ordinary years there are caravans at this season every few days, but in consequence of the war none had started since our arrival and in the opinion of many people none were likely to. It was even said that the mahmal would go round by sea, a thing never before known to happen.

All this made me rather nervous about remaining in Medina. I had a strong suspicion that the Bedoui attitude of neutrality as regards the pilgrims would not last much longer, especially if any aggressive operations were undertaken by the newly arrived troops—of which there was much talk. We might at any time find ourselves really besieged and unable to get out at all. I by no means fancied missing the pilgrimage to Mecca which was my principal *objectif*.

Several courses were open to us: we might wait at Medina and take our chance of a caravan to Mecca, or go with a caravan to Yembu and from there by sea to Jiddah; or we might return to Damascus. The last had the advantage of being safe and certain, but I did not much like the idea of the train journey over again, nor did I want to miss the experience of caravan-travelling in Arabia. There was talk of a caravan leaving for Yembu in the near future, but nothing definite was known about it. Every one whom we consulted advised us differently. Some laughed at my apprehensions and assured us that it was inconceivable that we should be prevented from making the pilgrimage. There was a limit even to Bedoui audacity. Others advised us to get out while there was yet time.

Events however took place which hastened our decision. Masaudi came back to the house one day at lunch-time bringing tidings of a distinctly unpleasant nature. Standing in the mosque just before the noonday prayer, he had suddenly felt a hand on his shoulder, and turned to find himself face to face with a party of five

Mombasa Swahilis, all of whom knew him intimately, and what was worse, two of whom knew me, having been several times to my house in Mombasa on business connected with land purchase. Of course he was overwhelmed with greetings and questions. When had he arrived, whom was he staying with, how had he got on in England, and where had he left me ?

Masaudi displayed considerable presence of mind. He had left me, he said, in England. Having saved money, he thought he would never get a better opportunity to perform the pilgrimage than the present. Arriving in Egypt, he had signed on as a sort of servant to some rich Egyptian pilgrims with whom he was living. In return for this information they told him they had arrived from Yembu two days before, and were staying with the Zanzibar Mutowif, whom they did not like at all, nor his house either.

After the prayer they all walked back together : Masaudi dropped his string of beads on leaving the mosque. They asked where his house was. He promised to show them, then, half-way up the street, he suddenly remembered the beads, bolted back to look for them, and speedily managed to lose himself in the crowd. Then he returned to the house by a circuitous route.

I was not at first inclined to attach very much importance to all this. I did not think that any of them would recognize me if we met accidentally in the street or mosque. Of course I should have to be very careful, for the future, never to be seen about with Masaudi, and he must avoid bringing them to the house at all costs. Still I quite realized that we were in some danger, and evidently it would not do to travel to Mecca in the same caravan with them. Abdul Wahid however took a very serious view. He said our lives were no longer worth a moment's purchase. All along he had been very much opposed to bringing Masaudi for this very reason.

As good luck would have it, that evening the town crier was announcing that the caravan would start for Yembu the next day but one. Here was an escape from the *impasse* that suited us all, and we at once decided to avail ourselves of it.

The next day was spent in preparation. Abdul Wahid arranged for three camels, one of them to carry a shugduf, the other two for luggage. We bought the food we should require—rice, dates, and dry bread. We arranged to take with us Jaffa the Persian as cook, and his brother-in-law Ibrahim, also a Persian, as general servant. I cashed my cheque for £100, paid a few bills and our rent, and bought a rifle and fifty rounds of ammunition. By the afternoon, all being in readiness, we sent for porters to take our luggage to the place where the caravan was parked. The first to arrive no sooner saw the interior of our room than he gave a yell, and rushed headlong down the stairs and out into the street. Astonished at his behaviour, we ran to the window and shouted to him to know what the mischief was wrong. He said he had not been hired to carry a corpse to the cemetery. We gazed at each other in utter bewilderment, then, looking back into the room, a solution of the mystery dawned on us. Our folded tent lying on the boxes did look exactly like a body swathed for burial. We told what had happened to the other porters, who had turned up. They showed great appreciation of the joke, and I have no doubt the runaway has had to put up with chaff on the subject ever since.

We carted our things down to the big square where the caravan was parked, where we were to pass the night. Leaving Masaudi in charge, Abdul Wahid and I returned to the Haram to perform the ceremony known as the "leave-taking." This is practically a repetition of former recitals before the tomb, but it is considered a specially appropriate occasion for private prayers, which, we were assured, would undoubtedly receive attention. Hamza conducted us through the ceremony. At parting we gave him five dollars, with which he was quite satisfied. He followed us with many good wishes and prayers for our safety, and said he hoped we would stay with him next time we came. As we passed out for the last time I could not help saying to myself that at any rate we were safely out of Medina. As is usual with self-congratulations, mine were premature.

It was dark, but some shops were still open. As we walked down to our bivouac it suddenly occurred to

me that I would buy some chocolate. Telling Abdul Wahid to wait a minute, I walked back to a shop where I had seen some. Standing in front of it were two guides. As I came up one of them remarked, "See, here he is." I myself was evidently the subject of their conversation, whatever it might have been. While I was buying my chocolate I heard them carrying on a whispered consultation. As I turned to go they came up to me. One said, "Look here, what country *do* you come from? We know you are not a Bagdadi! Why all this mystery about it?" (My translation is of a somewhat free order.) I said, "What the devil has it got to do with you?" "Much," they replied. "Each of us has a right to a particular country, and we want to know which you belong to." I told them so far as I was concerned they could go on wanting, and walked away. They came after me and one caught me by the arm. I threw him off roughly and told him what I thought his mother must have been, while he expressed his opinion that the whole of my ancestors were unbelievers and addicted to a certain vice. Though the first part of this accusation was quite true, I began to get angry. A passage of arms appeared imminent, and weapons were drawn on both sides. At sight of my automatic Colt the bystanders hurriedly took cover, being aware, possibly by experience, of the somewhat comprehensive effects of that weapon. At this juncture, by the special mercy of Providence, our late landlord Iman came down the street accompanied by two friends, and promptly intervened. A crowd was fast collecting, but fortunately the original cause of the quarrel had been by now quite lost to view. In the end we were read a lecture on the evils of brawling in the streets, and reminded that if the watch happened to come along and find us thus engaged, we should suffer for it.

Having once cooled down a little, we were neither of us sorry to forgo our "satisfaction." They knew perfectly well they were in the wrong, and anyway, a beating and imprisonment would scarcely be compensated for by the knowledge that I was getting the same, to say nothing of the chance of absorbing some ·450 expanding bullets into their systems during the struggle. So we drew off snarling at each other.

On the way to the square Iman asked me what the row had been about. I told him, and he seemed rather puzzled. No doubt by this time he had an inkling as to the true state of the case.

Arrived at our belongings, we took leave of him and his son Ibrahim. I had given Masaudi a silver watch to present to the latter, who was quite delighted with it. I think they were all really sorry to part with us, and Iman very kindly said he only hoped he would have the same good fortune with his next tenants.

Masaudi, relieved of his sentry-go, hurried off to the Haram to perform his final devotions. On his return, we ate a frugal meal and turned in as best we could.

The square was now crammed with luggage, camels, shugdufs, and the other apparatus of a caravan. There was scarcely room to move about, and I was at a loss to imagine how we should get off in the morning. It looked as if it would take days to sort out.

We passed a very cold and uncomfortable night. The shugduf in which I was sleeping, or trying to sleep, collapsed at about one a.m. A shugduf is a sort of howdah that fits on to the camel's back. It consists of two trays on a wooden framework, surmounted by a roof of canvas or sacking. The two passengers sit or lie one on each side, the luggage fitting in between. The motion of the whole arrangement as the camel lumbers over the rough veld is comparable only to a torpedo boat in a hurricane. It is necessary for both passengers to be approximately the same weight and to get in and out at exactly the same moment—otherwise the whole thing tips over. If the camel stumbles, or comes down, or kneels down unexpectedly, the travellers leave hurriedly over the bows, accompanied by their belongings in a sort of cascade. When the shugduf to which this happens is occupied by a family party, consisting of a fat Turkish official, his wife, and three children, all dressed in the Ihram, the effect is peculiarly exhilarating from the onlooker's point of view. Other kinds of camel furniture comprise, a litter slung on a pole, like a sedan chair, between two camels, fore and aft, and a thing like a tea-tray roped on to the camel's back. The former is used mostly by ladies of means, and is said to be quite comfortable ; the latter

by people who cannot afford a shugduf. Many travellers ride on top of their baggage, which is really the most comfortable way of all. A few have proper riding camels and saddles, but so slow is the pace of the caravan that there is no real advantage in this.

The luggage is so arranged that the weight is distributed evenly on either side of the camel's back. Boxes are usually sewn up in sacking covers and roped together, so that it is practically impossible to get at them till the end of the journey.

We were aroused at daybreak by the artillery practice, to which we had by now become so accustomed that we hardly noticed it. Great confusion of course prevailed at first, but in a wonderfully short time, all considered, the camels were loaded up, and we were able to move off. We left the town by the northern gate, and halted outside while the line of march was arranged.

The camels are the property of Bedou Arabs who make their living by letting them out for hire, and conducting them on the road. There is a regular organization among them, supervised by the Government. There is a fixed scale of charges annually agreed upon, which may not be exceeded except in extraordinary circumstances. In each town there are sheikhs responsible to the local authority for a certain number of camels and men. These sheikhs issue tickets to the pilgrims which are collected at the other end and serve as proof of their safe arrival. Complaints as to bad camels or misbehaviour on the part of their conductors are made through the same channel. These arrangements reflect no little credit on the Turkish administration, and have done much to diminish abuses. This particular year, however, they counted for very little, owing to the chaos caused by the disturbances in progress.

The big caravans in ordinary years, more especially the one convoying the mahmal to Mecca, are very well organized. They have a large escort with guns, scouts out by day, and outposts at night. A proper market is established every evening in the middle of the camp, where food and firewood are sold according to an approved tariff. A magistrate tries and punishes criminals on the spot, and decides disputes. Any pilgrim

having cause to complain of his camel-men finds a ready hearing. Halts are made for prayers and bugle-calls give timely warning of the hour of starting. Everything is done with almost military precision. These caravans however are so expensive that they are available only to the wealthier class of pilgrims. Twenty or even thirty pounds per passenger may be asked.

Our caravan was of a very different description. The travellers were nearly all poor people, for the reason that few others had come to Medina this year, and those that had were going round by Damascus rather than face the journey to Yembu. This particular route is supposed to be the worst in the Hedjaz, that is to say, it is the most dangerous and involves the hardest trekking. It has, on the other hand, the merit of cheapness, and does not involve wearing the Ihram, which is necessary if leaving Medina for Mecca. We had no escort or police arrangements of any kind, and no market. Each traveller had to carry his own provisions and water. We must have numbered about five thousand camels all told. In charge of the whole was a Bedoui sheikh, with about twenty retainers, on fast riding camels. All the camel-men, of whom on the average there was one to every three camels, were armed with rifles and swords. Most of the pilgrims carried weapons of some sort.

CHAPTER V

MEDINA TO YEMBU

We finally got off at about ten o'clock, after having been inspected by a Turkish officer who countersigned our tickets. Ibrahim's father, who had many times travelled this route, came with us as far as the gate and gave us sound advice at parting. He warned us to be very careful with the camel-men, and not to be bullied into giving them more money than the deposit they had already received, and on no account to leave the caravan on the march or get near the outskirts of it at night. He recommended us to put all our belongings inside the tent and sleep with one eye open and weapons handy.

We found ourselves very nearly at the head of the caravan ; at starting there were not a dozen camels in front of us. Behind us the line stretched for miles. We had been going an hour before the last part had left Medina. Masaudi and Abdul Wahid occupied the shugduf, I rode the best of the baggage-camels, the one carrying the most comfortable load. Ibrahim and Jaffa took it in turn to ride the other. Our camel-man, whose name was Saad, was a small, wiry Bedoui, almost black from exposure to wind and sun. His features were of a purely Semitic caste, free from the slightest suggestion of African admixture. But for his dress he might readily have passed for a Boer transport-rider. In Medina he was all politeness and full of promises of what he would do for us on the journey, but this demeanour very soon underwent a change when once we were fairly out of the town.

The last caravan which had travelled from Yembu to Medina had been forced to make a wide detour across country to avoid a band of robbers that had assembled

on the road for the purpose of plundering it. This must have been very unpleasant for the wretched pilgrims, who had to walk for about eight hours at a stretch, the ground being too rough to ride. The road itself was bad enough in all conscience. We could only hope that no such necessity would arise this time, but we were told it was by no means unlikely. About three miles from Medina we turned west, crossed the railway, and thenceforward were slowly ascending. We passed quite unmolested through the enemy's lines ; not a shot was fired in our direction, though shells from the forts were bursting less than half a mile to our left. By three o'clock we had entered the mountains and Medina was no longer visible. An hour later we caught another and final glimpse of the dome and minarets of the Haram just appearing through a cleft in the hills.

We plodded slowly and steadily onwards, the road getting rougher and the country more rugged with every step we took. At times we got off and walked for a bit—to stretch our legs and rest from the monotonous and fatiguing motion of the camel. By sundown, when we halted for five minutes for the evening prayer, we had ascended quite a thousand feet. As night fell the cold became severe, and a keen wind sprang up that chilled us to the bone. Still ascending, we stumbled along what was more like the bed of a torrent than a road. Fortunately there was a good moon or there would have been many accidents.

The pilgrims, who had been very quiet all day, now tried to keep up their spirits by singing, shouting, and firing guns. When first this began, I made sure we were attacked ; but apparently it is quite a common way of passing the time. The whole way to Yembu there was a ripple of shots up and down the line. Some people say the idea is to frighten the Bedou robbers by showing them that the pilgrims are armed. I should think it was very much more likely to draw on an attack. By eleven o'clock most of them were too tired and hungry even for this ; by midnight I began to wonder if we were ever going to stop. We had been fourteen hours continuously under way and had eaten nothing since the morning except a few dates, which we had to swallow as best we could on

the camel's back, a performance by no means easy, and apt to give one violent indigestion.

At half-past twelve the sheikh in charge trotted forward, as we joyfully heard, to select a camping-ground. A few minutes later the camels in front were halted, and we came to a standstill in a wide valley between high mountains. The camp was formed in the simplest way. The leading camels, kneeling down, formed a nucleus around which the remainder collected as they came up, thus forming an encampment roughly circular in shape and packed into the smallest space possible.

Great was now the confusion, and lively the scene. The darkness and silence of our march for the last hour, broken only by occasional curses and lamentations, and the shrill cries of the camel-men to their beasts, was changed in a moment for a veritable pandemonium—the grunts of the camels as they were made to kneel, the shouts and orders in a dozen languages, the mingled cries, complaints, and laughter. A thousand camp-fires sprang into being as if by magic, and lit up the scene. All busied themselves with the important matter of preparing the much-needed food. Personally I was so numbed with cold that at first I could hardly stand. We had brought, fortunately, a good supply of firewood, and soon had a blaze. Our two servants and Masaudi proved very adept at getting things straight, and our tent pitched, while Abdul Wahid got the tea-things out and the kettle on the fire. Saad, the camel-man, and two others conducting a party of Egyptians, had collected their camels in a ring with their heads pointing inwards; they themselves were sitting back to back in the centre, feeding their brutes with hay made into ropes. Each camel got his exact share and no more; all seemed equally dissatisfied with it, and disgusted with the entire proceedings.

These Bedou camel-men astonished me by their indifference to the cold. Clad only in their thin cotton clothes, they showed not the slightest desire to come to the fire, but sat among their camels, laughing and talking, apparently neither hungry nor thirsty, cold nor tired, though they had walked fourteen hours on end, the temperature was near freezing-point, and they had eaten

nothing all day. No wonder they are good campaigners. No civilized soldiers could stand this sort of thing for long.

While I was trying to get warm a man stumbled against me and nearly knocked me into the fire. Turning round, I was shocked to see a figure stained almost from head to foot with the blood from a tremendous gash in the head, obviously a sword-cut. He asked for water, and I went into the tent to get him some, but returning with it found him gone. We heard the next day that no less than six men had been murdered that night and many others wounded, and so it went on till we reached Yembu. These unfortunates were mostly people who could not afford camels, and so had to perform the journey on foot. Straying from the main body in search of firewood, they get picked up by the marauders hanging on the flanks, who seize every opportunity to plunder such stragglers of their miserable possessions, and kill unhesitatingly any who resist.

Within a quarter of an hour of our arrival we were drinking tea in our tent, our beds were laid out, and we ourselves were once more fairly warm and comfortable. Jaffa, the cook, prepared a dish of rice and meat, which was ready in another hour. Seldom have I eaten with a better appetite or enjoyed a supper more. We had however no time to lose if we wanted any sleep, for the word was passed round that we were to start again at dawn, and it was past two o'clock before we had finished.

Scarcely, it seemed, had we turned in when the bustle of preparation around us proclaimed that it was time to turn out. It was still quite dark, blowing hard, and colder than ever. The moon had sunk and the stars were, I think, brighter than I have ever seen them. While packing up we had an altercation with Saad, the camel-man, who violently abused Abdul Wahid because we were not so quick about it as he would have liked. The latter said nothing at the time, but, once we were started, expostulated with him with equal vehemence. The argument lasted several hours, at the end of which Saad consented to be pacified. I was now riding in the shugduf with Masaudi, and Abdul Wahid was taking his turn on the other camel. We traversed the same rugged country, still gradually going upwards. By ten o'clock it was once

more decently warm, by midday it was blazing hot. We started so wrapped up that we could hardly climb into the shugduf, but by the afternoon found a "kamis" quite sufficient covering. One great drawback to this kind of travelling is that if one has to get off for any purpose it is impossible to stop the camels, and one is obliged to remount while they are in motion. To get into a shugduf is not too easy at any time, but when the camel is under way it involves an acrobatic skill which I personally do not possess. The only way is to make the camel lower its head, get a foot on it, then swarm up its neck and so scramble into one's place. Unless the other occupant of the shugduf is very smart in resuming his position at the same moment disaster is certain. While in it alone he must crouch on the camel's back itself, and on no account lean to one side, or the whole blessed thing will capsize.

During the afternoon Saad, restored to good temper, regaled us with a description of the life led by these camel-men. Since he was big enough to walk he had done nothing but trek backwards and forwards over this road. He could neither read nor write, and seemed ignorant of even the elements of the Mohammedan religion. I never saw any of these Bedou praying, and don't believe many of them know how to. Saad had most extraordinary notions regarding the outside world, and was quite surprised to hear that there were bigger towns than Medina. He was intensely interested in Abdul Wahid's description of Berlin and Paris, though I could see that from the first he had put him down as a hopeless liar. Apparently he was under the impression that most Europeans were cannibals. His Arabic was pure and classical —approximating to the language of the Koran—and his pronunciation of its characteristic consonants such as we despaired of imitating—Abdul Wahid as much as myself.

We journeyed on till nine p.m., when we camped and the performance of the previous night was repeated. Several shots were fired at the caravan on the march and in camp, but none of them came near us. Some more stragglers were murdered, and a few robberies were committed in camp—the ordinary incidents of the road, which excited no remark.

The next day we trekked from sunrise to sunset, traversing a wide valley between high and precipitous ranges. The whole aspect of this country is indescribably wild and desolate. No trace of vegetation is to be seen, and the rocks assume weird and fantastic shapes, no doubt due to the alternations of great heat and cold, which cause them to split in all directions. Far to the south I saw one range topped by a peak which must have approached the snow-line. The summit was lost in the clouds and guarded by absolutely sheer precipices at least two thousand feet in height. Surrounding it and facing us was a sort of vast amphitheatre, forming a precipitous wall on the inside.

Here, at least, is a field still open to the explorer. This vast territory of Arabia remains largely *terra incognita* even in a geographical sense, while regarding its geological structure, fauna, flora, and other physical aspects, we know scarcely anything. Western travellers, it is true, have passed over a great part of Northern Arabia at different times, so that by coapting their narratives we can gain a fairly just idea of the country, and even map it roughly. Modern science, however, demands more than this of the explorer, who, to fulfil its requirements nowadays, has to carry and use a certain amount of apparatus which Arabian travellers, hurrying in disguise from point to point, have seldom been able to do. Charles Doughty, in 1875–7, lived among the Bedou of this part of Arabia, and wandered over much of it in company with them. That he was able to do so was due in great measure to the fact that he carried nothing worth stealing, with the result that his journey, though of unique interest in other ways, was somewhat barren of results in the matter of the precise and accurately-recorded information that is of real value to physical science. This remark is by no means intended to belittle one of the most remarkable achievements in the history of travel, but to point out the difficulty that always confronts the would-be Arabian explorer. If he leaves his instruments at home he may come back empty-handed; if he takes them with him he may not come back at all, if indeed he ever gets started.

Much has been made of the fact that Doughty made

this remarkable journey without denying either his religion or his nationality. That however is perhaps the least remarkable thing about it. The Bedou themselves are not fanatical on these points, and he did not attempt to enter the forbidden cities. Of course the fact of a stranger being a Christian is always a good excuse for knocking him on the head; but failing it they will soon find another if they want to do so, and will be quite uninfluenced by it if they don't. Once more perhaps I may be pardoned for reminding my readers that we are speaking of the true Arabs of the Arabian desert, for the above remarks are far from being applicable to other parts of the Moslem East.

During the day Saad informed us that it was usual to give "bakhsheesh" at the rate of a dollar a day during the journey, and he further demanded the whole amount of pay still owing to him. I was about to answer this preposterous demand myself, when I was restrained by the tactful Abdul Wahid, who told him we had no money with us, and should not be able to pay him till we got to Yembu, and could cash a cheque. Saad then made various complaints, pretended to be dissatisfied with the food we gave him, and finally threatened to take his camels away and leave us at the next halt. So insolent did he eventually become that I decided to shoot him. Informed of this intention, he suggested that we should have it out with swords when we got into camp. Other pilgrims, overhearing the quarrel, implored us to use no violence. They said that if one of these men were killed the whole of his tribe would assemble to demand blood money and not improbably plunder the caravan. Nevertheless, we could not stand this sort of thing, and I had quite made up my mind that a "scrap" would be inevitable if it went on. To my astonishment, however, Saad was again suddenly all politeness, and so he remained till the end of the journey. When we got into camp he assisted me to dismount and paid me various little attentions, which behaviour I was for some time at a loss to account for. The explanation of this remarkable change was a simple one: Ibrahim, always a cheerful and ready liar, had told him that I was a nephew of the Governor of Yembu. It worked admirably, colour being

lent to the statement by the deference shown me by the others.

Many other parties, however, were less fortunate in their dealing with these savages. In various ways they managed to bully and rob them till they had extorted many times the amount originally agreed upon. Even then they were not satisfied, and were constantly threatening to go off and leave them unless some further *douceur* was given. This threat, if put into execution, as it not infrequently is, involves of course the loss of all the traveller's belongings and his having to walk the rest of the way. To remain at the halting-place after the caravan has passed on would mean certain destruction. The party of Egyptians I have mentioned before were induced to pay the whole of their fare early in the journey. They were then constantly worried for bakhsheesh and annoyed in various ways till they submitted to the extortion. At last, hearing rumours of my exalted station, they came and complained. I had their two scoundrels up and lectured them, threatening at the same time to report their conduct to "my uncle." I should dearly have liked to have ordered their heads to be taken off on the spot, but felt that might be carrying the joke too far. If the behaviour of the camel-men is bad when dealing with pilgrims of Arab extraction, it is far worse with those of other races, especially with those who are unacquainted with the language. Indians especially are given a very bad time, and are generally too poor spirited to retaliate. Of course it sometimes happens that they "catch a tartar," literally as well as metaphorically, and there is a Bedoui the less in the world after some more than usually outrageous piece of insolence. But pilgrims know only too well the usual consequences, and even the most ferocious generally prefer to submit. On one occasion I saw an old Indian, who had persistently refused to hand over the dollar demanded of him, bombarded with stones till he fell from his camel. Several times we had to interfere on behalf of the weak and decrepit to save them from similar or worse ill-treatment.

The state of affairs here described would not of course exist for a moment in any of the properly organized caravans, and is only to be found on this road, which

is little frequented except by the poorer class of pilgrims. This year I believe it was quite abnormally bad : usually the arrangements made by the authorities with regard to tickets and registration of camels are sufficient to check any gross outrage.

We passed through a Bedoui village, consisting of small mud huts and a few date-trees—the first habitation we had seen since leaving Medina. There is a small well here, but insufficient, as we were told, for the requirements of a caravan. The camels would get water at the next camp but one. Our fourth day's march was merely a repetition of those that had preceded it, but we had now passed the watershed and were descending rapidly to the coast. The road was very rough in places, but the camels surprised me by the agility they displayed in clambering over rocks and boulders. I saw no accidents, though we traversed ground that I should not have cared to ride a horse over. We got into camp early—about an hour before sundown. It was the first time I had had an opportunity of inspecting our encampment by daylight, and I was astonished to see that we were the only people who possessed a tent, or at any rate who had troubled to pitch one. There was a large well here, fitted with a windlass, about a hundred feet deep. The water drawn was emptied into curious cup-shaped cavities, lined with sun-baked clay, from which the camels drank. I do not know how many of them watered here—certainly not all.

A row of tumble-down sheds did duty as a market, and here some villainous-looking Bedou were selling meat and dried fish. This is supposed to be a very dangerous place, and we were warned not to go far. The camping ground was of course in a very filthy condition, which was unpleasantly obvious by daylight. The rest, all the same, was most acceptable, and as we were not to start till ten o'clock the following morning, we looked forward to a long sleep—which we duly enjoyed.

We were now to trek straight through to Yembu without another halt, absence of water being the reason alleged. We started at ten a.m. and travelled without stopping till six the following morning. I rode the spare camel till sundown, and then changed into the

shugduf. About four o'clock in the afternoon we emerged from the hills on to a vast level plain, with barely a trace of vegetation, extending to the sea. Shortly after midnight the riding lights of the ships lying at anchor in the roads of Yembu became visible. We arrived outside the wall just before dawn, but in compliance with the usual rule, the gates were not opened till sunrise, so we had to wait. A caravan leaving for Medina was parked outside, ready to start at daylight.

Being, fortunately, near the head of the caravan, we were able to crowd through the gate as soon as it was thrown open. Had we been among the last, we should have been delayed for hours. We passed down a wide street and halted in an open square near the centre of the town. It was uncertain whether we should be able to get a steamer that day, so we decided to take a room where we could rest and get some food, of which we were much in need. Abdul Wahid and I went to search for one, while the others unloaded the camels. The first few rooms we inspected were in an unspeakably filthy state, and the one we finally agreed to take, at the rate of a rupee a day, was not much better, but we were too tired and hungry to be fastidious. This room was on the ground floor of a house almost opposite the place where we had put the luggage. It had just been vacated by the last tenants ; the floor was covered with orange peel and other refuse and was inches deep in dust. In the corner smouldered the remains of a charcoal fire. The morning sun, streaming through the windowless sash, lit up the desolation within, and did not make its appearance any the more inviting. Curiously enough that house impressed us all the same way—as being infected with some pestilential disease. It probably was. It is really extraordinary that no decent accommodation is to be found in these places. Any one starting a hotel here or in Jiddah would be sure of large profits.

We made an excellent breakfast off boiled eggs and hot rolls, but decided to forgo our sleep till we had arranged for our passages. We accordingly went down to the quay, where most of the shipping offices were situated. There were about half-a-dozen ships of various nationalities at anchor in the open roadstead in front of the town.

The offices were in a row, and standing outside each door a sort of salesman was proclaiming the merits of his particular steamer, the price of the tickets, and the hour of starting. There did not seem much to choose, so we fixed on one who was vociferously inviting the support of all true Moslems on the ground that his ship sailed under the Turkish flag—an absolute lie, as we subsequently discovered. She was a Greek ship of antique design that had been chartered for the season by a syndicate of Persians. There are no "classes" on these lines—the tickets are all one price, which varies however every few minutes, according to the amount of competition and number of pilgrims. When there is a likelihood of getting a full complement of passengers, the price goes up; if a scarcity, it goes down. The one object of the owners is to get a full ship somehow. We were anxious to start that day, so before we took our tickets we extracted a definite promise from the agent that we should sail before sunset. As a matter of fact we struck rather a bad time and paid a good deal more than later applicants—to wit, two dollars apiece. We were told that no one would be allowed aboard till the afternoon, which suited us rather well. On returning to the house, we settled up with Saad, the camel-man, paying him the remainder of the fare agreed upon and a very moderate amount of bakhsheesh. Here in Yembu of course we had him at our mercy. I don't know if he ever discovered the little deception arranged for his benefit, but I doubt if he ever conducted a less profitable party than ourselves in the whole course of his mis-spent existence. However, he made the best of it, professed himself satisfied, and went off. Before leaving the subject I may say that the road we travelled by is not the only one between Yembu and Medina. There are at least two others, used at different times of the year, but I was unable to get hold of any useful information concerning them.

We took our luggage down to the quay and, leaving Masaudi in charge of it, went round the markets to replenish our food supply. Yembu is the most tumble-down place I ever saw. The houses are all askew, and the minaret of its solitary mosque stands at an angle that

recalls the leaning tower of Pisa. It is also about the dirtiest place I ever set foot in. The dingy markets are strewn with every kind of abomination, the odours as variegated as they are unpleasant. There are, however, some tolerably good shops where most necessaries of life are obtainable. The town of course is protected by a wall on its landward side, and a large garrison is necessarily kept here. Water is a great difficulty—the supply being limited and very brackish. It is said to be extremely unwholesome, which I can well believe. A distilling plant has recently been put up, and may tend to improve matters.

Our shopping concluded, we looked for a café where we might get a smoke and some coffee. The best we could find was about in keeping with the rest of the town, but we were not by way of being particular just then. We sat down at a small table outside, after asking permission, in accordance with the courteous custom of the country, of a Bedoui sheikh already sitting there. We ordered pipes and coffee. Just then the Bedoui's pipe was brought. He took a pull at it and looked unhappy. "You rascal," he said to the attendant, "I don't believe this water is fresh." "Not fresh?" replied the latter, "Why it was changed the day before yesterday!" This was too much for the sheikh: words failing him, he picked up the pipe and threw it at the waiter's head. The projectile, missing him, passed through the open window and burst inside. I hurriedly countermanded my order and decided to stick to cigarettes.

All considered, notwithstanding, we were inclined to take a more cheerful view of life than we had done for some days. The air was warm, and the sunlight on the blue water was a delightful change from the glare and dust of the desert. It was pleasant to be dressed in clean clothes and to be at rest again after the fatigue and monotony of camel-travelling. We were disposed to make light of present discomfort in the recollection of past hardships. Moreover, here was the first half of the enterprise accomplished successfully, and the practicability of the whole clearly demonstrated.

Two enormous Turks or Anatolians came and sat down at our table. They really were most ridiculous figures,

for they combined the outward appearance of a stage brigand with the benign expression of a family doctor. They had enormously wide trousers, hitched very low round their waists and looking as if they might fall off at any moment. In their belts they carried no less than three revolvers apiece, of about three-quarters of an inch bore, some cutlasses, and a few miscellaneous daggers. They were both well over six feet in height, very stout, with huge grey beards and whiskers. We pretended to be horrified at their ferocious appearance and implored them not to quarrel. When at last they comprehended the joke, which was not for some time, they literally roared with laughter, slapping us continually on the back. They then invited us to join them in a glass of lemonade.

We lunched off fried fish, which was very good, like all Red Sea fish ; its flavour was not impaired by the fact that we had to eat it with our fingers, standing behind the wheel-barrow from which it was sold—but the flies were a nuisance. They were in millions. Several times we went to the shipping offices to ask when we could go aboard, and were continually put off on one pretext or another. We began to suspect that they did not mean to start at all that day, in which we were right. Several other ships put to sea in the course of the afternoon, but at about four o'clock our people announced that they were not allowed to sail till the next day, and so we could not go aboard till the following morning. This of course deceived nobody—it being perfectly obvious that the only thing preventing them was lack of passengers, and that they simply proposed to wait until they had filled the ship to her utmost capacity. We were told it might easily be three or four days before we got off, and we had no remedy. There appeared to be nothing for it but to take another room and wait, as we could not very well camp on the quay. We abused the shipping people till we were tired, and then engaged a room in a house adjoining their office. This was certainly cleaner and better than our first venture, but it cost another dollar. This was not of very great consequence to me, and we had so much time on our hands that I did not greatly care if we were detained in Yembu a day or two. We wanted a rest. Not every one, however, was so fortunately situated.

They could not all afford to throw dollars about for accommodation they had already paid for. An angry crowd began to collect in front of the office, demanding that the ship should start. I was half undressed in our new quarters, intending to take a bath, when sounds of a tumult without brought Masaudi and myself to the window. We saw that the office was besieged by an infuriated mob of passengers, who were all shouting at the top of their voices, while the wretched Persians crowded in the doorway were vainly endeavouring to make themselves heard. In the foremost rank of the rioters, yelling louder than any one, we were astonished to perceive Abdul Wahid.

Fearing that he would get into trouble, we ran downstairs and forced our way through the crowd to his side. We found him in a state of wild excitement and apparently regarded by the other demonstrators as their leader. At his suggestion we seized the Persians, with the exception of one whose green turban proclaimed him a "shareef," or descendant of the Prophet, and to whom, therefore, it would be improper to offer violence, and carried them off to the house of the governor, whose aid we proposed to invoke. The governor, however, was most emphatically "not at home." Foiled here, we returned to the quay, and Abdul Wahid, mounting a pile of sugar-bags, proceeded to address the meeting. He wound up an impassioned exordium, constantly interrupted by applause, by denouncing their behaviour as unworthy of Islam. "We had better be dealing with Christians," he perorated, "than Moslems who cheat their brethren in this fashion." Murmurs of protest deprecated this revolting comparison; we all felt he was going a little too far. In the end, the Persians gave way; we were permitted to go aboard at once, and they were made to promise faithfully that we should start at sunset.

Once more we had to pack up and move in haste. With some difficulty we got a boat, and after passing a nominal inspection at the quarantine station, rowed out to our steamer, which was lying about half a mile from the shore. When we arrived, about a hundred pilgrims were already aboard, and others were crowding up the gangway, at the top of which we saw the chief of the Persian syndicate directing affairs. No sooner did he

catch sight of us than he began a storm of abuse in Persian, to which Abdul Wahid replied in kind. The substance of it all was that we, by heading the riot, had been the cause of all the trouble, and the loss they would incur by sailing with their ship half empty; that we could have our money back, but they would see us somewhere before they let us come aboard. We paid no attention, shoved our boat alongside and proceeded to carry the gangway by assault. Ibrahim, going first, butted the Persian in the stomach and forced his way past, followed by Jaffa and myself with the hand luggage. This was seized by the syndicate, who attempted to pitch it overboard. Abdul Wahid, however, had by now become a popular hero, and the rest of us shone with a reflected glory. Everybody realized that it was entirely owing to him that the Persians had been brought to terms. A crowd of excited pilgrims gathered to our rescue. Some Moroccan Arabs seized the unfortunate syndicate, and swore that if any of our belongings went overboard, they would be thrown in after them. Willing hands helped to hoist our heavy luggage on deck, and we were conducted in triumph to the best place in the ship, where our mats were spread and our things arranged for us. Ingratitude is not a common vice in the East.

In the meantime Ibrahim had a conversation with the Persians which put an end to further friction between us. It now appeared that I was a near relation of the Governor of Jiddah, and was fully determined to report the whole affair to him on arriving there, having been greatly scandalized by the proceedings to date. This news caused something like consternation among them. Thenceforward they could not do enough for us, in the hope of correcting the unfortunate impression they had made. Between this and the effusive gratitude of our fellow-passengers, we made the voyage in far greater comfort than would otherwise have been possible. I could not help feeling rather flattered by the readiness with which these accounts of my illustrious connections always obtained credence.

The ship, originally a cargo-boat, had been fitted up expressly for the pilgrim-traffic. The hold was occupied by two strata of decks fore and aft, reached by ladders

leading through the hatchways. Being in ballast and very light, she stood high out of the water, and I have no doubt would have rolled abominably in any sort of a sea. Fortunately it was calm as a duck-pond. She soon filled up, and by sunset there must have been quite fifteen hundred passengers aboard, and more still arriving every minute. Every inch of space seemed occupied. I reflected that if this was their idea of a half-empty ship, I should be very sorry to travel in a full one. The Persians excused their failure to start as promised on the ground that they could not leave passengers behind.

The position we had taken up was on the upper deck, just abaft the bridge, and we had about five times as much space as we were entitled to. Jaffa, with a charcoal brazier, managed to cook us an excellent dinner, and we were able to pass a very comfortable night after all. I went to sleep before I had finished my pipe, and knew nothing more till eight o'clock the next morning.

CHAPTER VI

JIDDAH

When I awoke we were getting under way. A violent altercation was taking place over the following question. A party of Magribi Arabs had passed the quarantine and were half-way out to the ship when one of them died (*sic*). The boat put back, but the shore authorities refused to let them land again. They then came out to the ship, and the Persians utterly declined to take the corpse aboard. They could not throw it overboard because certain ceremonial washings remained to be performed, and prayers said, before it could properly be "committed to the deep." The dispute was as to whether they were entitled to bring him aboard or not. An Egyptian lawyer camped near us was asked to bring his forensic knowledge to bear on this rather nice point. He was of the opinion that the man, having taken his ticket, was entitled to a passage, dead or alive, there being no saving clause in the contract. The tickets, in fact, consisted of slips of paper with the name of the ship and a number scribbled on them, and nothing else. I thought that having expired after leaving the shore he was practically a passenger, and should be considered as having died on board. The Magribis, however, got sick of arguing, and came swarming over the bulwarks, secured a footing on deck, and hoisted up their departed comrade without more ado. Their fierce brown faces and long knives sufficed to prevent any one from interfering actively. The rumour that the man had died of cholera, which got about shortly afterwards, fortunately proved unfounded.

We left Yembu at half-past eight and soon lost sight of land. The last thing we saw was a caravan just starting

for Medina, the long line of camels trailing for miles across the sandy foreshore. Another quarrel broke out almost immediately over the question of water-supply. It is an understood thing that drinking-water in reasonable quantities is supplied free on these ships. Our Persians wanted to sell it. In the end, the passengers crowded on to the bridge and threatened to throw the whole syndicate into the sea if it was not issued at once. The captain, an enormously fat Egyptian, then interfered, and insisted on a free allowance being made, to which the Persians had to consent. We declined to take any part in this disturbance, being quite satisfied with things as they were.

There was one Western European on board, a doctor, I think, and an Englishman by the look of him. He remained in the chart-house with the captain, so that I only saw him at a distance. When we arrived at Jiddah he made a sort of formal inspection of the decks, so I concluded that he was connected in some way with the quarantine arrangements.

At about half-past four in the afternoon the syren was blown to announce that we had reached the latitude at which it was necessary to exchange our ordinary clothes for the Ihram. This garb is obligatory on all travellers approaching Mecca, on attaining a certain distance from the holy city, and it must be worn thenceforward until they have performed the circuit of the Kaaba and kissed the black stone. It must also be worn during the three days of the pilgrimage itself. Some people wear it during the whole of their stay in Mecca as a self-inflicted penance, and a few also when entering the Prophet's tomb at Medina —though I believe this is not allowed by the Shafei sect. The idea is purity and humility ; that every one entering God's house shall be dressed the same, irrespective of wealth or rank, as simply as is consistent with decency, and in pure white. The costume for men consists of two cloths, one worn round the waist, the other over the shoulders. Nothing else is allowed—even a belt is, strictly speaking, prohibited, though it is often worn along with weapons. The head is left uncovered and umbrellas are, properly speaking, barred, though invalids or aged people may use them if they wish, and others with no such

excuses often do. The loin cloth should not reach much below the knees. The most usual form of Ihram worn by well-to-do people consists of a couple of Turkish bath-towels, made especially long for the purpose, and with these we had provided ourselves before leaving Damascus. Some wear a sort of petticoat and shoulder cloth of linen or cotton instead of towels ; it is quite optional. Women wear a long linen robe completely covering them, head and all, provided with a straw mask with eye-holes for the face. Before assuming the Ihram it is proper to shave the head and body, with the exception of the breast and, of course, the beard and moustaches. A person so attired is known as "Muhrim," and to him certain things are unlawful which at other times are permissible.

In such a climate as this the wearing of the Ihram naturally means some hardship, particularly to pilgrims from northern countries not inured to the powerful rays of the Arabian sun. It is really marvellous that half of them do not die of sunstroke ; but it is a simple fact that they don't. Personally, I suffered far more from the cold at night than from the sun during the day, and but for a few blisters on my neck and back was none the worse for it. One of the objections to the direct route from Medina to Mecca is that one has to wear Ihram nearly the whole way ; even the covers of the shugdufs are taken off lest they should afford the prohibited shelter.

Having arrayed ourselves in the manner described we said a special prayer as directed in the little books with which we were provided, and we were then at liberty to take stock of each other and laugh at the comical aspect we presented. I felt very thankful that I had not acquired what is vulgarly known as a "corporation." A party of elderly European Turks close to us looked peculiarly ludicrous, their appearance suggesting members of the Athenæum Club suddenly evicted from a Turkish bath. The utmost restraint imposed by good manners could not prevent my laughing whenever I looked their way, conduct which caused them to shake their heads and lament the decay of courtesy in young men of the present day.

We anchored off Jiddah at eleven o'clock the following

morning. It was not possible to approach nearer than about a mile from the shore, and we had to disembark in boats, of which a great number were collected in waiting for us. There were quite a dozen other ships at anchor, among which we recognized some of those we had seen at Yembu. We thought it better to wait till the bulk of the pilgrims had got off before going ashore ourselves, so as to avoid the crowd and possible loss of baggage from getting mixed up in it. Eventually we engaged a small boat all to ourselves. On landing, we were made to pass before a Government official, who merely asked if we were Arabs or Turks, and made a note of our answer. Arriving as we were from Ottoman territory, our passports were not demanded, neither was our luggage examined. We found a line of Mutowifs waiting on the quay, who put the same query, but hearing we were Arabs, they took no further interest in us. Had we been Turks or Persians we should have been pestered to engage them. It was no longer possible to tell the pilgrim's nationality by his costume, all being similarly attired. I am told that there are special people employed here to watch for any European attempting to enter disguised, but if this is true, which I doubt, they failed in their duty on this occasion—not that this is in any way surprising, for as I have already remarked there is nothing to prevent many Englishmen passing as Arabs, clothed or otherwise.

As we proposed to stay here a few days we took some trouble to find decent accommodation, and eventually obtained three rooms and a kitchen on very reasonable terms in the house of a certain Persian "Shareef," a very respectable and nice old man. As it was now past midday, and as we were too hungry to await Jaffa's rather lengthy preparation of food, we went to a restaurant for lunch. The best we could find consisted of a single room with a long table down the middle. Only one dish was provided, and that consisted of chunks of meat impaled on a long skewer, the whole suspended over a charcoal fire just outside the door, so that intending customers could have a good look at it first. The cook-proprietor, armed with a toasting-fork, stood on the threshold to prevent them submitting it to any more practical tests. As each selected a piece, it was detached and handed to

him, along with a plate and piece of bread. The table d'hôte was not expensive—about twopence! The proprietor was a Christian; but a notice over his shop announced that Moslems might eat there without risk of defilement.

Non-Moslems are allowed to reside in both Yembu and Jiddah, provided that they do not go outside the walls. In the latter place there are a few Christian and Jewish merchants, and most of the European Powers are represented by Consuls. They are, however, by no means safe from maltreatment even here. The Consulates are situated all together in the northernmost quarter of the town.

Jiddah is supposed to be one of the oldest cities in the world. It is a very picturesque place, especially as seen from the sea, and, like Yembu, it is in a very dilapidated condition. The high, narrow houses seem tottering on their foundations—the minarets of its mosques are all yards out of the plumb. A slight earthquake shock would reduce both places to a heap of rubble. The streets and markets, though dirty, are as nothing in that respect compared with Yembu. There are a number of good shops and several fairly respectable cafés. The climate though hot is not in itself unhealthy, and is far preferable to that of Mecca, which on a still day is a perfect furnace. Here at Jiddah the sea-breezes keep the air moving, and help to carry away the miasmas arising from the insanitary condition of the streets and habitations. The water, like that of Yembu, is scarce and brackish. Epidemic diseases of all sorts are unfortunately very prevalent.

The Oriental appearance of the place is accentuated at this season by the Ihram, which nearly every one is wearing. It seems strange to see streets and cafés filled with people clad only in bath towels. At first I could not help feeling positively indecent; but the sensation soon wore off.

We now found ourselves in rather a difficulty owing to my uncertainty as to whether or not a certain sheikh from Mombasa was coming to the pilgrimage. This man knew of my intention to go to Mecca in disguise, and I had originally intended to form one of his party. For various reasons I had changed my plans, and on deciding to go independently of him had judged it advisable to put him

off the scent by writing and telling him that I had given up the idea. As a matter of fact, he never for a moment thought I really meant to go. If, however, he was coming I foresaw that it would be practically impossible to avoid running across him in Mecca in the course of a whole month, so I considered it preferable to meet him here in Jiddah and have it out before starting. I intended to hold him to his original promise not to interfere, even if he were not prepared to assist me. I was not altogether confident in his good faith, and realized that we were now facing as serious a danger as any that had hitherto confronted us.

The first thing to do was to ascertain whether or not he had already passed through, and for this purpose I sent Masaudi to reconnoitre the house where Zanzibar pilgrims usually stay. He returned with the intelligence that the sheikh had not arrived ; but a letter from him had been received some time previously, and he was expected daily. I decided to wait a few days on the chance of his coming. We were in no hurry, and I certainly preferred to see him here in Jiddah, where escape would be possible if things went wrong, rather than in Mecca, where my life might depend entirely on the view that various considerations, principal among them his own safety, might induce him to take.

We remained, in consequence, four whole days in Jiddah, not counting the days of our arrival and departure. The second day we took the opportunity to visit the tomb of no less a person than Eve—who is said to be buried here. Her mausoleum is situated some little distance from the wall, and is, as might be expected, in a rather ruinous condition. I was informed, however, that the edifice is comparatively modern, and was not built by Adam—as my informant evidently thought I might suppose. " Our Lady Eve " was apparently about a quarter of a mile in height, so that in her present recumbent position it is rather a tiring walk round. Two small domes, one at each end, mark the positions, of her head and feet, while a third, about the middle, indicates the region of her epigastrium. At each of these we were supposed to say the customary " fatiha," though many people decline to prostitute in this manner so solemn a

prayer. The women who guard the tomb have to put up with a good many witticisms from their visitors—not always, I am afraid, of too delicate a description. For some reason no one seems to take this sacred monument very seriously.

Our reputation, acquired from the Yembu *émeute*, had outlived the short voyage, and we found ourselves pointed at in the streets and elsewhere as the heroes of that affair, whose public-spirited action had been instrumental in bringing nearly two thousand pilgrims down the coast who might otherwise have been detained at Yembu indefinitely. Abdul Wahid certainly made the most of this—he never was one to hide his light under a bushel—and though I found our sudden popularity rather embarrassing, I felt I might easily need it all before we saw Jiddah again.

On the fourth day, several ships having in the meantime arrived from the south without bringing further tidings from Mombasa, I decided on mature consideration to chance it, and go on to Mecca. I was rather tired of Jiddah for one thing, and our two servants were beginning to wonder at this unaccountable dallying.

Determined, however, to neglect no possible precaution, I wrote a letter to the sheikh explaining what had happened and demanding from him an attitude of strict neutrality. This I deposited with the landlord of the house where he would most probably stop, with instructions that he was to give it to him if he came, and if not, keep it till I returned. We then selected a Mutowif, and telling the story that had served us so far, offered to engage him. It appeared that he was the local agent of one of the principal Mecca guides, a man called Mohammed Miftah, to whom he promised to write, telling him to look out for us. I have had this rather on my conscience, for of course we never had the slightest intention of doing business with either of them. However, in adventures of this sort, one can't afford to be too scrupulous. We arranged with a Bedoui sheikh for camels to be brought to our house at dawn the following day.

Once definitely decided on our course of action, I think we all felt easier in our minds than we had done for some

time. In time of danger it is waiting that tries the nerves; once fairly launched to the attack there is no time for unpleasant reflections, and the necessity for present action precludes vague fears for the future. The day being Friday, we attended the midday service in the principal mosque—a tumbledown place of no particular interest—and then adjourned to a café, feeling that we had taken all precautions that wisdom or piety could suggest. Abdul Wahid made a vow that if he returned safely he would present three dollars to the poor of Jiddah. We told him we thought he was asking the Almighty to do it rather cheaply, and that he had much better make it a sovereign. To our disgust, when we did get back he utterly declined to disgorge the promised sum.

The next morning we were up betimes, and had all in readiness before daylight. Our camels were punctual, but I was not pleased with their appearance. The one I was to ride looked as if it might die at any moment. The poor beasts have a very bad time at this season, for their owners have to make what they can out of them while it lasts, and consequently never give them a rest. We had hired four for this journey, for we had sold the shugduf at Yembu, and it did not seem worth while to buy another.

CHAPTER VII

JIDDAH TO MECCA

From Jiddah to Mecca is a distance of about forty miles and the road is protected the whole way along by a line of block-houses or small forts, almost within rifle-shot of one another. It is consequently safe to travel independently, and there is no necessity to wait for a caravan. There are also small booths at intervals of about a mile, where " light refreshments " are obtainable. Many people send their luggage and servants by camel and ride through themselves on donkeys. I rather regretted afterwards that we had not done so ourselves.

Leaving the gate, we passed out on to a level, sandy plain some seven miles across, terminating in a range of low hills ; the string of camels extended right across to these hills and disappeared among them. At this time of year an almost continuous line of camels stretches from Jiddah to Mecca, so vast is the number of pilgrims flocking into the holy city. We had not gone very far when I felt a sinking sensation and found myself deposited suddenly on the ground, fortunately on that part of my anatomy best adapted to take the concussion without injury. My poor camel was obviously finished, whether from overwork or disease I know not. We turned our string out of the road, abused our camel-man for bringing us animals in such a condition, and threatened to go back to Jiddah and cry off the deal altogether. We had to wait about an hour while he went to fetch another, and we did not finally start till past eight o'clock. Our chapter of accidents was by no means over. Abdul Wahid and I hit on the unlucky idea that we might get down at one of these little cafés, have a

smoke and some coffee, and afterwards catch up our camels. The pace of a baggage-camel is barely two miles an hour, while a man can easily walk three. We consumed thus some twenty minutes, and then started to walk on. The air, which had been delightfully cool in the early morning, was now getting momentarily more sultry, and the sun was beating down on the sand in a way that rendered walking over it with bare feet more than unpleasant. We trudged along as best we could, but soon found that, far from our gaining on the camels, they were actually gaining on us. We had by now entered the hills, and the caravan was forced to proceed in single file. We tried to pass the word along to turn out our string, but the pilgrims near us were all Indians and we could not make them understand what we wanted. Fortunately Masaudi, with his usual common sense, finding that we did not come up, acted on his own initiative and halted in the first open space he came to, where we rejoined him, very hot and footsore, and wiser for the future. I seriously thought at one time that we should have to walk the whole way to Mecca.

At about half-past four in the afternoon we reached the village of Bahreia, which is supposed to be half-way, but in my own opinion is very much nearer Jiddah than Mecca. It consists of a few shops, where provisions and fodder may be bought, some eating-houses, and "kraals" for cattle and goats. There are some date-plantations near by, and a large fort with a garrison, a company or more, affords the village the much-needed protection. Bahreia lies in an open plain some few miles in width, bounded on the Jiddah side by the range of low stony hills we had just traversed, and running out into sand-dunes to the east. Water seemed fairly plentiful, and was not noticeably salt.

We camped, some little distance from the village, on the cleanest ground we could find; and did not trouble to pitch tents, as the weather was fine and warm. It was our intention to start at dawn the following morning; but our camel-man contrived to upset our plans and forced us to make a night march. His idea of course was to get us to the end of our journey in the shortest possible time, so that he could return to Jiddah for some more

passengers. Besides our lot, he had three other camels, which were carrying some Egyptians—a man and two women. He managed to bluff them into starting at eleven o'clock, just as the moon was rising, and then came to us to say that they would not be allowed to enter Mecca unless we came too, since his pass was for a certain number of camels, and if they did not all appear, he would be refused admittance. This was probably a lie, but as we could not very well make the Egyptians offload again, we had to make the best of it and go too. I did not much mind; it was much more pleasant to ride through the warm, still night than in the daytime with the sun beating down on our shaven and defenceless heads. So we saddled up and joined the stream of camels still flowing silently eastward. Day and night it is the same; we seemed drifting into Mecca on a rising tide of humanity. When one considers that in the course of the month perhaps half a million people travel this road, beside nearly all the food and other stores they require, it is easy to realize the enormous number of beasts that must be employed.

The silence of the whole is strange and impressive. There is no longer any shouting, singing, or firing of shots. Most of the pilgrims are too awed by their surroundings to divert themselves thus, and the camels steal forward over the soft sand without a sound. It is difficult for an outsider to realize the true Moslem's feelings as he approaches Mecca. To him it is a place hardly belonging to this world, overshadowed like the Tabernacle of old by the almost tangible presence of the deity. Five times daily throughout his life has he turned his face toward this city whose mysteries he is now about to view with his own eyes. Moreover, according to common belief, pilgrimage brings certain responsibilities and even perils along with its manifold blessings. Good deeds in Mecca count many thousand times their value elsewhere, but sins committed there will reap their reward in hell.

In the early hours of the morning we passed between two white stone pillars, which mark the boundary of the sacred territory, and thenceforward we were treading consecrated ground. Nothing within may be hunted,

or killed at all except for food. All wanton destruction of life is forbidden.*

After passing the line, a special prayer is repeated at intervals, at times in chorus. It runs as follows :

" Oh, my God, I am here, I am before Thee, Thou hast no compeer, Thine is the power and the kingdom. Mercy is Thy attribute. Here I am, here I am. Oh, my God, here I am ! "

The last words (Lebéka, lebéka, Allahooma lebéka) are repeated many times over in a sort of wailing key and taken up again and again at different points along the line.

In our half-clad condition we found the early morning air very chilly and were glad when the sun rose. As it got light Ibrahim, who had made the pilgrimage before, pointed out to me the Gebel-en-Noor (mountain of light), a high conical peak surmounted by a sort of beacon, which I am told is really a tomb. This is one of the famous hills overlooking the city. About eight o'clock we passed a few stone houses some distance to the left, which we were told belonged to Mecca, and accordingly we read the prayer appropriate to the first sight of its buildings. Each of us was provided with a book containing all these prayers in their proper order, to be recited on different occasions, such as on assuming the Ihram, the first view of the city, passing the gate, catching sight of the Kaaba, and so on. This particular prayer began :

" Oh, Lord, who hast brought me in safety to this place, do Thou bring me safely out again." A sentiment to which one person at any rate in that caravan said " Amen " most fervently.

Yet though I must confess to having felt a little nervous, I had only to glance round to see that most of my fellow-pilgrims were more frightened still. As we approached the town their excitement became quite painful to witness. For about an hour we travelled on, passing only a few small huts and an occasional Bedoui tent, till I began to wonder where on earth Mecca could be

* In the state of " Ihram " the pilgrim is forbidden to take life of any kind ; even insects, with the exception of scorpions and one or two others dangerous to human beings, are protected. All loud talking and squabbling are likewise prohibited.

hidden. Suddenly we turned to the left and saw in front of us a great hollow surrounded by high stony hills, one of them crowned by a large, formidable-looking fort, another by a mosque, and the rest by other buildings that I was at the time unable to identify.

Mecca in fact lies at the edge of the rough mountainous country which extends far into the interior of Arabia. The town is situated in a deep, narrow valley, so completely hidden on the seaward side that one sees no sign of it till almost arrived at the gate. This valley runs approximately north-east and south-west, and seems to extend for a considerable distance.

Abdul Wahid and I decided to go forward on foot to reconnoitre, and if possible find a suitable house before the camels arrived. We instructed Masaudi to trek right through to the farther side of the town and halt in the main street, where we promised to rejoin him. We knew that we should have to run the gauntlet of those confounded guides, who would be in waiting for us as we entered the gate. Walking forward rapidly, we passed the new barracks—a spacious building capable of accommodating several regiments. Then, as we entered the long main street leading to the centre of the town, we found, sure enough, a row of the Mutowifs, as usual tastefully dressed in all colours of the rainbow, completely barring the way. But we were ready for them this time. As we approached, Abdul Wahid called for "Mohammed Miftah," who, as good luck would have it, was not there. We asked several of them about him, and of course they all concluded that we were already "fixed up," and therefore did not bother about us. An old sheikh, their official chief, stopped me and asked my name. "Ali," I told him. Nationality? "Arab." We then passed on. As there must have been hundreds of Arabs of that name passing every day, I concluded he must be paid by the Government to ask these foolish questions. At any rate I breathed freely once more, and I may as well say at once that, thanks to this device, we had no further trouble with the Mutowifs. Naturally we made no further effort to find Mohammed Miftah.

We made our way down a wide, straight, and rather imposing street for about half a mile, and then turned

MECCA.

into the arcades, which were so crowded that we had some difficulty in getting along. Emerging from these we came to another long, straight road, leading as I was told to Mina, and after about twenty minutes' walk we arrived at our destination. Turning out of this crowded thoroughfare, we came to a district of quiet streets with tall, shuttered houses, some of them possessing small gardens. This, we were informed, was the best residential quarter, specially favoured by Persians and Arabs from the Irak, *i.e.* Bagdad, Kerbela, and the Euphrates Valley. It specially appealed to me as it seemed unlikely that Zanzibar or Muscat pilgrims would be able to afford the rents here demanded. Another advantage was that, in case of cholera, we should be safer here than in the more populous parts of the town. In the epidemic of the previous year this district had escaped very lightly compared with the others. As I had more than £100 left, I thought that further economy was unnecessary, and we might make ourselves as comfortable as possible.

We inspected several houses before finding one that met our requirements. In the end I decided on a suite of three rooms, with a roof garden, in the house of a brass-worker, by name Mohammed Saeed. The principal apartment was large, clean, and airy, and the others were quite passable. I liked the look of our landlord and his son—the latter a man of about twenty-five—natives of Mecca. After much bargaining we agreed to pay £7 for the month, for which we were to have the use of the kitchen, and to be attended by the household slaves should we require their services. Once having come to an arrangement, we found them very hospitable. The women of the house prepared food and coffee for us, while the men assisted us with the luggage, which had arrived with Masaudi and the others. I was rather astonished at getting what we wanted so cheaply, for I had been quite prepared to pay £15, or even £20, for our accommodation. Mohammed Saeed told us he would always let his rooms cheaply to respectable Arabs, who could be trusted to be quiet and of cleanly habits, in preference to obtaining a much larger sum from Indians or Javanese. It appeared that he had a nephew living in Zanzibar, and he was very interested to hear about

that country. I mentioned casually that I did not wish him to tell any one where I came from because I was afraid of trouble with the Mutowifs, a request that seemed perfectly natural to him, and to which he promised to pay due regard.

Having installed ourselves thus comfortably, and done justice to a very good lunch served on a table in European style, with plates, knives, and forks, we determined to go to the Haram* at once to perform the "towaf," after which we should be able to exchange the Ihram for our ordinary clothes, which we were naturally anxious to do as soon as possible. Masaudi had a bad headache, so at Mohammed Saeed's advice he decided to wait till the next morning, as the ceremonial involves a lot of running about which in the hot sun is very fatiguing.

Abdul Wahid and I therefore went together, duly performing our ablutions before starting. Twenty minutes' walk brought us to the gate of the Haram, and passing through we found ourselves at last in the great square that encloses the little group of buildings we had come to see. Before our eyes was the Kaaba, its black covering almost startling in its contrast with the dazzling white of the sunlit marble pavement. From it our awe-struck gaze travelled in turn to the plain masonry dome that covers Zemzem's holy well, to the strange objects that mark the "makams" of Mohammed, Abraham and Ishmael,† and the curious stone hut of the Shafei sect; and then passed onwards to lose itself in the twilight of the surrounding colonnade.

The outstanding impression left by the whole scene is that of the unusual. It is not beautiful, it could not fairly be called majestic, but it awes one by its strangeness. One feels instinctively that one is looking on something unique: that there can be nothing else in the world the least like it. Whether the *genius loci* resides in the edifices themselves or in their arrangement, or whether it is auto-suggested by the tremendous belief

* The mosque, or Haram, of Mecca is called by Moslems "El-Masgid el-harám" or "Bait ullahi el-harám." The last expression really means "the house of God, the prohibited" or "the sanctified."

† In Arabic: "Ibráheem," "Ismaéel."

concerning the small square building in the middle,* I cannot decide, but it is there. Be the explanation what it may, the effect is almost uncanny. Few pilgrims gaze on the scene for the first time unmoved : the most reckless are awed into unwonted silence.

We prayed the two-rukka prayer ordained for this occasion, and then sat for some time in the shadow of the colonnade looking out across the sunlit space beyond and taking in the scene.

The photographs in this book give a much better idea of the place than any verbal description could do. The sides of the square measure about three hundred yards, and the colonnade which surrounds it is about twenty yards in depth.† This is supported by stone pillars and roofed by small domes, as appears in one of the pictures. The floor of the colonnade is of rough-hewn granite ; the square is strewn with gravel and traversed by paved walks converging on the centre. The buildings comprise the Kaaba, the Zemzem well, a pulpit, the "makam" of Abraham, a small arch, and the "makam" of Ishmael, the last a peculiar semicircular wall built on to the Kaaba. The Kaaba itself, which is an almost perfect cube with faces about forty feet square, is built of large granite blocks. It has a wooden door heavily studded with iron, placed about eight feet above the ground, and so necessitating the use of a ladder by those who would enter. It stands in a sort of shallow marble basin, oval in shape and measuring about forty yards at its greatest diameter.

The outer wall of the Haram is of brick, and houses and shops are built on to its exterior face, which from their upper stories overlook the interior of the mosque. There are about eighteen gates altogether, the principal of which, that on the northern side, is reached by a flight of stone steps leading into a small market, appropriated to booksellers' shops, which terminates at the gate itself.

Nothing in the whole pile of buildings has the smallest

* Moslems interpret the expression "house of God" in its most literal significance. Many Mohammedans fear to look upwards near the Kaaba on the day of the Hag. By some the flapping of its curtain is thought to be caused by the wings of angels.

† These measurements are by eye, and very roughly approximate. A full description of the mosque will be found in Sir Richard Burton's book, "A Pilgrimage to Al-Medina and Meccah," Appendix II.

pretensions to architectural beauty or material value. Stern simplicity and extreme solidity are the keynotes of its design. The Haram is comparatively modern, and the Kaaba itself has been several times rebuilt. Very complete histories of Mecca exist in Arabic.

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We applied to one of the numerous guides standing about to conduct us through the necessary ceremonies, the first of which consists in the walk seven times round the Kaaba.* Moving across the square to the edge of the depressed platform on which it stands, we took our guide's hands and joined the throng surging round it. It was about three o'clock in the afternoon, the hottest time of the day, and the mosque was comparatively empty. Yet there must have been quite a thousand people going round. Day and night throughout the year it is never quite deserted. The "towaf," as this ceremony is called, would be considered to bring peculiar blessing to any one fortunate enough to be the only person performing it. Some of the earlier Caliphs, Haroun-er-Raschid among them, were in the habit of creating artificially the desired conditions—by turning out every one else—but that was not considered playing the game.

Partly running, partly walking, we made our way round and round, repeating the while a long prayer after our guide. At the end of our seventh circuit we had to kiss the famous "Hagar-el-aswad," a stone let into the corner of the building about four feet above the ground. A hole in the sable drapery gives access to it, and I was able to notice that it is heavily encased with silver, and that the small part of it exposed is being actually worn away by the kisses of the devout. This stone is said to have fallen from heaven. It is in fact evidently of meteoric origin.

We now prayed another two-rukka prayer, and then left the Haram to perform the ceremony called the "Saa," which consists in running between Safa and Marawa, two small hills about three hundred yards

* It would perhaps be more accurate to spell these words with an "h." thus: "Mekkah," "Medínah," "Kábah." This "h," however, is mute unless the word is inflected, when it becomes a "t." There is, moreover, the risk of confusion with the other "h" of Arabic, the guttural ح that gives such trouble to non-Arabs.

apart. The line joining them runs nearly parallel with the eastern face of the Haram, and the road between them takes in the adjoining street. Backwards and forwards we went, running part of the way as prescribed and repeating another long prayer all the time. It is on account of these prayers that a guide is so convenient, as he knows them all by heart, and so saves the pilgrim the trouble of either reading them out of a book or improvising them for himself, which latter might be beyond his capacity. The street we had to traverse was thronged with pedestrians, camels, horsemen, and loiterers, so progress was necessarily slow. Our last turn concluded, we prayed a final prayer for the Divine acceptance of what we had done ; then a small circular patch of hair was shaved off our heads, and the ceremony was over. We were now at liberty to dress ourselves in our everyday clothes and live like ordinary citizens of Mecca up to the time of the pilgrimage. It was a great relief to get back to the house, as we were both thoroughly tired out, and very footsore. Jogging up and down the rough road with bare feet was none too pleasant, and I fear that once or twice, happening to hit an unusually sharp piece of stone, I was betrayed into expressions distinctly out of keeping with our occupation. A bath and the change into decent clothes soon put us right and disposed us to take a cheerful view of things in general.

CHAPTER VIII

MECCA

We spent the next few days very pleasantly in exploring Mecca. There was much to see and do, and the crowded markets were a never-failing source of interest and amusement. Mecca is a very much bigger place than Medina: its normal population apart from pilgrims is said to be 70,000, though I should have put it myself at a much higher figure. It must be remembered however that the pilgrims there during the week of the Hag may number upwards of 500,000, and that for most of them house accommodation has to be provided, so that the number of buildings composing the city is greatly in excess of what would normally be required. The streets are, generally speaking, wide and clean, and the houses are nearly all three or four stories high—sometimes more. The principal markets are roofed, as in Damascus, and though they do not compare with those of that place in number or variety, there are nevertheless some very good shops. The merchants cater almost entirely for the pilgrims, most of whom like to take away with them some memento of their visit. There are no local industries whatever, and I quite failed to find anything that could be considered characteristic of the place itself. Goods are imported hither from all parts of the Orient—silks from Syria, carpets from Turkey and Persia, brass-work from India and Egypt—and all these things "go down" well enough with most of the pilgrims, but are the despair of the traveller who knows he could

buy the same things better and cheaper in many much more accessible places than Mecca. Beside the resident merchants traders from all parts of Islam bring their wares to Mecca at this season, and are always certain of finding a ready market and doing a profitable business.

The government of Mecca is peculiar. It is really a semi-independent province of Turkey, under the rule of a "Shareef" who is invariably chosen from certain families descended from Ali and Fatima. This Shareef is considered to be an independent monarch: he lives in a palace, maintains a corps of guards, and has theoretically absolute powers within his own narrow dominions. He is treated with the same ceremony as the Sultan of Turkey or any other Eastern potentate. The lineage of the Shareefial families is supposed to be pure and irreproachable. In them one ought to see the Arab as he was in the days of the Prophet, before the Moslem conquests had introduced the foreign element which in these days is so apparent in most of them. The present Shareef is a man of about fifty, of medium height and good build. He has straight, regular features, a long, grey beard, and a rather dark complexion.

The Turks have a considerable garrison in Mecca, but I was unable to ascertain the exact number of troops. The big fort overlooking the town from the south-west should be capable of accommodating a couple of thousand at least. It looks a formidable work, almost impregnable to assault, but of course not adapted to withstand heavy artillery. Forts become obsolete nowadays almost as quickly as battleships. The public buildings of Mecca include a court-house, post and telegraph and other Government offices. There are no monuments of interest except the somewhat doubtful relics of the Prophet which I shall describe presently. Beside the Haram there is only one other mosque in the town itself.

The climate of Mecca is not a pleasant one, though it is by no means unhealthy. It is very hot all the year round, and very dry. Rain falls only once or twice a year, but when it does fall it makes up for lost time.*

* The year after I was there a sudden cloudburst flooded the Haram and drowned several people.

The town is so shut in by the surrounding hills that a breeze seldom reaches it, and the heat reflected from their rocky faces greatly increases the glare in the daytime and the stuffiness of the atmosphere at night. In the term of years during which the pilgrimage falls in the winter months it is customary for the Government and the wealthier citizens to remove themselves for the summer to Taif, a place about three days' journey to the south-east, which is much cooler, has a good water-supply, and is comparatively fertile. The soil of Mecca is almost entirely barren ; practically nothing, so far as I could see, grows anywhere in the neighbourhood. Its inhabitants depend exclusively on supplies from outside sources, and it was always a marvel to me where the food required by the enormous number of camels came from. There is, I suppose, a certain amount of grazing for them among the mountains.

The only true well in Mecca is the one in the Haram called "Zemzem," and the main water-supply of the town is derived from springs at Mount Arafat. The water is brought to Mecca by a conduit which runs through the town subterraneously, and is tapped at intervals by pits resembling wells. The water-drawers are a special class ; they carry the water in skins and supply houses at a certain rate per month according to the quantity required. The water is of good quality when uncontaminated, and the supply is plentiful, except when the channel gets blocked up, as occasionally happens.

There are several good cafés, which of course at this season do a roaring trade. Fresh food, such as meat, chickens, and vegetables, is obtainable at fairly reasonable prices ; but fruit is scarce and dear. Taken all round I think that of the two places I should prefer to live in Medina.

Abdul Wahid and I usually went about together, for it was not advisable for me to be seen with Masaudi. We generally went to the Haram for the midday prayer, and again in the evening, when we performed the "towaf," which, after the preliminary ceremony, merely involves walking seven times round the Kaaba and saying any prayers you wish—or none if you so

prefer. During the month we spent in Mecca I was able to examine at leisure the various points of interest, and to obtain much information concerning them which would be out of place here. A good idea of the enormous crowd that gathers in the pilgrimage season may be gained from the illustrations.

I bought these photographs at one of the bookshops in the short street leading to the main gate of the Haram. The proprietor, a Meccan by birth, told me the story concerning them already quoted. After we had been talking some time he produced some more photographs and some picture post cards of the kind that, in England at any rate, it is not advisable to use for correspondence. Misinterpreting the interest and amusement I could not conceal, he drew me into the darker recesses at the back of his shop and brought out an album of pictures, the nature of which need not be indicated more particularly. It seemed that amateur photography figured among that sinful old gentleman's more or less respectable amusements.

I relate this incident because it may seem almost incredible, to those who know how Mecca and its people are regarded in other Moslem countries, that such a thing should be possible within a few yards of the Kaaba. Such is the extreme respect in which Meccans are held that in foreign countries people will stop them in the streets to kiss their hands. The veneration for the Kaaba itself often amounts to positive physical terror. Yet here, on the very threshold of the shrine, we find—what I have described.

It will be gathered that my friend the bookseller had to make pretty sure of his ground before indulging his customers with these little exhibitions, and that I must, however unintentionally, have given him an unfortunate impression. The inhabitants of the holy cities, though given to all the vices of the Cities of the Plain and a few more beside of modern introduction, are in fact outwardly the demurest of hypocrites, and most of their visitors carry away the best possible opinion of them. At this season especially they are on their best behaviour, and the more sensational stories concerning what goes on there in public "in the Kaaba" are without foundation.

Sir Richard Burton got into hot water with many people for translating literally and without expurgation the "Arabian Nights." A perusal of his work will give the reader an idea of how strange a medley of grave and gay, religion and superstition, high moral precepts and cynically immoral episodes is Arabic literature. The "Arabian Nights," however, even in its most unrestrained passages, is *petite bière* compared with some other well-known books. One in my possession, entitled very inappropriately "Flowers of the Spring," was written by a learned doctor of sacred law for the purpose, so he says in his introduction, of affording entertainment and distraction to his pupils when wearied by their arduous theological studies. It begins with a page or two devoted to praise of God and His Prophet—the indispensable *hors d'œuvre* to an Arabic book on any subject whatsoever. A couple of stories from the "traditions," tending to prove that a joke is a good thing in its proper place, are followed by a little commentary on certain obscure passages in the Koran bearing no relation whatever to what has gone before. This is succeeded by an utterly irrelevant anecdote and some verses that would probably have been considered unduly coarse in a pothouse of Gomorrah. Before the reader has had time to recover from this outrage he is back again in some religious controversy, and so the reverend author drags his bewildered followers through four hundred and forty pages of the wildest jumble of theology, history, philosophy, eroticism, and many other subjects; the whole interlarded freely with passages from the Koran, quoted, of course, verbatim, and furnished with all the diacritical marks. Once written he evidently did not trouble to read through his manuscript, for the book abounds in repetition, and one anecdote of an unusually revolting character, which had evidently tickled him considerably, occurs no less than five times.

Yet this incongruous use of passages from a book of so highly sacred a character that the printed volume may not even be handled without previous ablutions does not appear the least strange or improper to the Arab mind; and to this fact is due the somewhat lengthy notice "Flowers of the Spring" is here receiving, for it

is very characteristic of the extreme reverence for the Koran itself and the utter disregard of its precepts so general in Moslem countries. To take another instance: a work on religious observances, regarded as so important that parents are directed to make their children learn it by heart, contains not a single direction as to moral conduct, but is entirely concerned with such matters as the nature of the ablutions to be performed *after* the law has been broken.

The habit of thought engendered by all this leads not unnaturally to what are, as we see them, anomalies strange as the one which originated this digression.

The people themselves in fact are the most interesting feature of the place. All that was said in describing the pilgrim crowd at Medina applies here, only much more so—for while the pilgrimage to Mecca is compulsory for every Moslem that can manage it, the visit to Medina is purely for such as can afford the luxury, and not one quarter of those who come to the pilgrimage * reach the latter place. The concourse gathered together for the Friday prayer the week of the Hag is a sight worth the seeing.

Among all the pilgrims of different races daily pouring in, I was most struck by the Javanese. In appearance and manners they seem not unlike the Japanese. They have the same acquisitive and imitative temperament, are intensely curious regarding everything new to them, and quick to adopt any fresh idea that may seem to them an improvement on what has gone before. In this they stand in strong contrast to the Arabs, and in fact to most Eastern peoples, whose extreme conservatism is what really hinders their progress. But while the Japanese have seemingly agreed to take England as their model, the Javanese endeavour to turn themselves into Arabs. The first thing they do on arriving is to attire themselves in the local costume—which, by the way, does not suit them at all. I am told that there are so many people wearing Arab dress in Java that a stranger might fancy himself in the Hedjaz. Most of them seem very

* It is not strictly correct to speak of a pilgrimage to Medina. A traveller to the tomb of the Prophet, or to Mecca out of season, is called a Záir, or visitor.

well-to-do, and they spend more money in Mecca than any other class of pilgrims. They often pay £100 for the use of a house at Mina for the three days of the pilgrimage. They are very keen Mohammedans, excellent linguists, and far better informed regarding current affairs than either Arabs or Turks. A certain Abd-ur-Rahman, with whom we later became acquainted, once made some remarks concerning them that struck me as worth remembering "It is in these people," he said, "and not in the Turks, that our hope for the future lies. They possess all the qualities we Arabs lack and will take from the Europeans their inventions and use them against our enemies just as Japan did with Russia."

I know no more about that part of the East than he does, but it is certainly a fact that in China, Java, and the Malayan Archipelago there are now some millions of Mohammedans, and the faith is rapidly spreading. It therefore seems by no means unlikely that he may be right in supposing that these new Far Eastern branches may prove a source of strength to Islam in the near future. In spite of the newspapers, Europe remains curiously ignorant in some ways. Our fathers regarded the Japanese in very much the same way as to-day we regard the Zulus. Possibly the next generation will have to reproach our own lack of foresight in some similar instance. Many people display a curious self-complacency in speaking of "governing" and "subject" races. They may be quite right in supposing that the power and civilization of the world will remain for all time centred among the nations of Western Europe, but there is nothing to prove it. Inductive reasoning, based on what we know of the world's history, leads to a contrary conclusion. Their theory, in fact, like that responsible for "race prejudice," rests on a gratuitous assumption.

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We made several friends in the course of the first week, mostly old acquaintances of Abdul Wahid. Among them was an officer in a Bagdad regiment, who introduced us to the above-mentioned Abd-ur-Rahman. The latter was an elderly man, a native of Mecca, who had charge of the special water-carriers that dispense the water from

the sacred well and the army of attendants who hand it round in the Haram. It is held to be a specially acceptable form of charity to give money for this purpose, *i.e.* to pay these servants wages in order that all comers may get the water free.* So many people have been charitable in this particular way that it has become almost a nuisance. One is pestered every two minutes to partake of the sacred fluid, which, though it brings wisdom and manifold other blessings, is none the less exceedingly nasty. For some reason this well is unusually brackish, but its water is greatly esteemed by the more superstitious as a panacea for bodily as well as spiritual ills. The most acceptable present to bring from Mecca is one of the curious round canisters containing a pint or more of it—the only objection to doing so being that the unbelieving officials at the first quarantine station will probably chuck it into the sea.

This particular job was apparently a perquisite of Abd-ur-Rahman's family, and had been so for generations. He was a person of some considerable consequence and proved a very useful acquaintance. He ordered a place to be kept for us in the Haram alongside himself and his friends, our mats being spread in the shade of the colonnade by day and outside in the evening. This was a great convenience, especially on Fridays, when most people have to come hours too early in order to get a place in the shade; otherwise they have to sit in the open square, which, at midday, is rather trying. We, however, could turn up any time we liked and make certain of finding a good place kept for us by Abd-ur-Rahman's obsequious retainers—all of which we got gratis but for the inevitable bakhsheesh. Abd-ur-Rahman invited me to his house, which overlooked the Haram, and I twice went to tea with him there. He was very hospitable, and before leaving I had to write my name in his visitors' book, the collection of autographs being one of his hobbies. He turned out to be a misogynist and, what is much more unusual in the East, a bachelor. The fiendish temper of

* Many people have the water brought to their houses in order that they may wash themselves and their clothes in it. This seems to have given rise to the idea that Mohammedans bathe in the well itself. This is an error—they do not. It is about forty feet deep for one thing. The water, however, may be used for ablutions.

his only sister, who kept house for him, was responsible, he told me, for his dislike of women in general. He had, it seemed, no sympathy whatever with the new constitution or with parliaments of any sort. He had the profoundest admiration for Abdul Hamid, and much preferred the old regime, to which he hoped and expected that his country would shortly return. We got on rather well together because on most of these points—I mean his political views—I was able to agree with him. On my second visit to him, however, his questions regarding my family and other affairs became so extremely embarrassing that I decided to decline future invitations, feeling that my talents for invention were unequal to further strain upon them.

We several times visited the slave-market.* Mecca is, I believe, one of the few places remaining where the trade is carried on thus openly. The slaves, who are kept in special show-rooms, sit, as a rule, in a row on a long bench placed on a raised platform. They are all women ; male slaves and eunuchs may be bought by private treaty, but are not exposed in the market. One is ushered into each room by the proprietor, who expatiates the while on the "points" of his wares, and the phenomenally low price he is asking for them. One may, if so disposed, prod them in the ribs, examine their teeth or otherwise satisfy oneself that they are sound in wind and limb, which their owner is usually prepared to guarantee if desired. It is not usual, however, to warrant them free from vice—which would, moreover, merely have the effect of depreciating their value.

In making a purchase one may either close at the price stated or make an offer, which will be noted, and accepted if no better one is forthcoming within a certain stated time. This is a very usual method of selling goods of all kinds in Oriental countries.

The usual price for female slaves ranges from £20 to £100. In the case of Georgians and Circassians with special physical charms and educational accomplishments it is sometimes much more. I asked about these, but was told that none had been brought to Mecca this year owing to the high mortality among them from cholera

* This, I believe, has since been abolished.

the year before. All the merchants offered to get me one if I would give an order, and to guarantee that she should be up to specification ; but I did not see my way to doing business on these terms. None of those we inspected would I have taken as a gift.

It will be perceived by the reader that the slavery we are discussing is simply legalized concubinage. These young women are sold by their parents, which, though doubtless very wrong in principle, is only the practical outcome of the system under which they live. As has been already pointed out, Islamic society is based on a conception of the relations that should exist between the sexes fundamentally different from, and entirely foreign to, Western ideas on the subject. Slavery in the sense of forced, unpaid labour can hardly be said to exist in these days, for the reason that the slave, if dissatisfied with his lot, can so easily run away.

The behaviour of the girls when undergoing the ordeal of inspection is what might be expected. The younger ones blush and giggle, and pretend to hide their faces. When the customers being shown round are also young and inclined to be facetious, they are quite capable of joining in the fun. The old and ugly, who have long despaired of finding a purchaser, sit forlorn and miserable, gazing dully in front of them and taking no interest in the proceedings. Their tired, hopeless expressions bring one near buying them out of sheer pity, as is not infrequently done by charitable people. But without a household it is useless to do this ; for to give them their freedom is merely equivalent to turning them out to starve. They at once hand themselves back to their former master, with whom they are sure at least of food and a roof to shelter them ; and the well-meaning purchaser is merely thought a fool for his pains.

Slavery, as we have seen, is by no means encouraged by the Mohammedan religion. It is barely tolerated, and that only in accordance with certain very strict regulations. A slave having to complain of ill-treatment is sure of immediate redress at the hands of the Kadhi—in serious cases freedom may be given from the offending master. The law looks after slaves very much better than it does ordinary servants in other countries. Of

course, abuses occur ; but they are less the fault of the law than of its administration. The one idea of every slave in the market is to find a buyer as soon as possible.*

We had been in Mecca about a week when Masaudi ran across an old acquaintance. This was a boy of about thirteen, Kepi by name, who, with his father, a certain Sheikh Mohammed, had travelled in the same ship with us from Mombasa to Port Said early in the year. They were then going on by way of Yembu to Medina, where they proposed to stay till near the time of the pilgrimage. Sheikh Mohammed had died on entering Mecca, about a month previous to our own arrival, and Kepi had been left in a destitute condition. He had however found out some fellow-countrymen, who had given him enough money to subsist on, and he lived in hopes of finding some party of pilgrims to take him back to Zanzibar. There are, by the way, a certain number of Swahilis and Arabs from that coast living in Mecca. Of course I was careful to avoid meeting any of them, but Masaudi, having once been recognized, could not help doing so. He accordingly went round with Kepi to call on their sheikh, and thenceforward saw a good deal of them. He explained that he had come there with two rich Arabs, one a Bagdadi and the other from Muscat, with whom he was living ; but being in the position of a servant he could not invite people to the house. As Kepi was a relation of some Mombasa friends of mine, I thought I would do a kind action by taking him with us when we went. Masaudi informed him that his Muscat patron, hearing of his misfortunes, had decided to return him to his own country, and would give him a weekly allowance in the meantime. Kepi of course was delighted, and at once volunteered to come to us as a servant during our stay ; but Masaudi told him that we had already too many retainers. He knew me by sight, so could not be allowed into the house till we were actually leaving. As a matter of fact, if Kepi had had a little more Arabic and common sense, he would have applied to any rich pilgrim for assistance,

* In spite of all endeavours to prevent it, and the stringent regulations in force at Egyptian and Sudan ports, a great many children are brought to Mecca every year from Africa and sold for slaves. Kidnapping in Mecca itself is not uncommon. The dealers, scoundrels for the most part, ask no questions.

which in nine cases out of ten would have been amply forthcoming. Any act of real charity performed on the pilgrimage, more especially in Mecca itself, is believed to cover a great multitude of sins, and most people are on the look-out for genuine cases worthy of their generosity. Orphans, moreover, are always objects of compassion among the Arabs.

Shortly after his meeting with Kepi, Masaudi returned to lunch one day bringing most welcome news. A letter had been received from the Mombasa sheikh, for whom we waited so long in Jiddah, stating definitely that neither he nor any of his party were coming that year. This relieved all our worst apprehensions. I knew by this time that no one would take me for a European, unless given outside cause for suspicion ; but the arrival of a large party of people who might recognize me from a chance meeting at any time, would have introduced a very perilous element, and certainly quite spoiled our enjoyment of our stay—always provided we managed to silence the sheikh himself, which was by no means certain. We were now assured that no more pilgrims who knew me by sight would be coming, and the only serious danger I could see ahead was from the four we had encountered at Medina, who were bound to turn up presently ; not that I anticipated much difficulty in keeping out of their way in so large a place as Mecca.

We devoted a morning to the usual round of sight-seeing, which here consists in viewing various relics of the Prophet and his family, all of them, I believe, of very doubtful authenticity. The first place of interest is a group of tombs some little distance outside the town on the left of the road going to Mina. Here are buried Khadijah, the Prophet's first wife, his uncle Abbas, Abu Talib, the father of the celebrated Ali, and one or two others less well known. In general these tombs resemble those in the Bakeia at Medina ; but they are kept in slightly better repair. There is some difficulty about Abu Talib, as it is moderately certain that he died an unbeliever. He gets, however, the usual fatiha, in accordance with the tolerant spirit of the age. While visiting these tombs we were beset, as usual, by crowds of beggars, who caught hold of our clothes and absolutely declined

to let us go forward till we distributed largesse. It is necessary to provide one's self for the purpose with a few handfuls of the small copper coinage known as "Nuhass," of which about a thousand go to the dollar.

On the way out we met a party of Indians, and agreed to "split" with them the cost of a Mutowif to take us round the tombs and other places we had to visit. One of these Indians was a large fat man dressed in European clothes, who told us he had been British Vice-Consul at some place on the Persian Gulf. He and Abdul Wahid conversed in English the whole time, the latter occasionally translating for my benefit. The Indian spoke English so well that apart from his appearance one would never have taken him for a foreigner; he seemed to know all about everything and had visited many countries, including England and Zanzibar. He asked me if I did not find my total ignorance of English rather a nuisance; to which I replied that I had often thought of learning it, but had been deterred by the difficulty of the grammar.

This misplaced flippancy might have had serious consequences. I believe that before we managed to get rid of him he had formed in his own mind a conclusion concerning our party which was not very far from the truth. However, we heard no more of him.

The next place we visited, after leaving the tombs, was the house where the Prophet was born. We were shown a room in the basement which had in the middle of it a small iron structure hung with curtains. Here we knelt down in turn, and putting our heads through a hole in the hangings, were enabled to kiss a circular slab of marble which marks the exact spot where the event took place.* The house itself is quite modern, and most people are very sceptical as to the genuineness of its claims. For obvious reasons, stories relating to the early life of the Prophet and his followers have nothing like the same right to credence as those of his later years, which may for the most part be considered historical.

We next visited the house where Ali was born, and went through the same performance. I had always understood that he was born in the Kaaba, and our guide admitted that there was disagreement on the subject.

* At Bethlehem there is something very similar.

Finally we were shown the house where Mohammed and his wife Khadijah lived together for so many years. This is really supposed to be genuine as regards its site, though the present building is new. The house being built in a sort of hole, one has to descend a flight of steps in order to reach the set of three rooms indicated as the historic apartments. In one of these we prayed a two-rukka prayer and read a passage from our guide-books containing some appropriate reflections. There is nothing particular to see.

I have forgotten to mention the underground mosque consecrated to the believing Jinn,* nor does it merit any elaborate description. The general appearance and atmosphere of the place suggest the Black Hole of Calcutta.

The only other place worth visiting in Mecca is the mosque at the summit of the Gebel Abbais, but as I was told there was nothing whatever to see there, and it is rather a stiff climb, we did not go. This day was observed as a sort of public holiday in celebration of the opening of the new Turkish Parliament. A salute of guns was fired at midday and at night there was an attempt at illumination and some fireworks. A band played outside the Shareef's house, where there was a display of torches and a considerable crowd of people collected.

Mecca did not however seem nearly so enthusiastic about the constitution as either Medina or Damascus. The question seldom came up in conversation, and most people with whom I talked of it seemed rather bored with the whole subject. The local paper however was full of extravagant panegyrics about the new liberty and so on. This paper is a recent innovation in Mecca. It is published weekly under the name of "The Hedjaz," and consists of four sheets half in Turkish and half in Arabic. If the editor would decide to stick to actual news, especially foreign intelligence, he would supply a "long-felt want." News of the outside world filters but

* The Koran admits the existence of a class of beings intermediate between men and spirits. These are the Jinn, or "Genii," as the word commonly appears in English, who figure so largely in Arabian stories. Some are good and others evilly disposed toward mankind. The phenomena of ancient magic and modern spiritualism are attributed to their agency.

slowly into Mecca, and usually gets distorted in the process. But as it is the telegrams are of the scantiest and most of the paper is taken up with drivel about freedom and so forth—along with fantastic schemes for the improvement of Mecca itself which if carried out would quite destroy the unique charm of the place.

I had some trouble in getting my cheque cashed. The merchant to whom I had been referred declined to honour it on the ground that, owing to some trouble that had occurred, he had no further business relations with Abdullah Waridie. On receiving, some time previously, the latter's notification that he was drawing on him, he had written on the subject and was waiting an answer. In the meantime he declined to do anything. Fortunately a letter from Abdullah, containing a draft on another merchant, arrived before my supplies were exhausted; but it might easily have been very awkward. I decided that it was less risky on the whole to carry one's money in cash.

There are no banks in the Hedjaz, owing to an absurd belief that the business of a banker is forbidden by the Koran. There is no justification for this, and the idea has long been combated by reasonable people. The prohibition in the Koran is against usury, and obviously was never intended to apply to reasonable rates of interest on deposits of money in business affairs. The odd thing is that any one might start a bank provided only that he paid no interest at all! It is not giving the money to the bank that is considered immoral, but receiving profit on it. Stranger still, they cannot see that the business of a money-changer, of whom there are many hundreds in Mecca and Medina, involves exactly the same thing. The money-changers make their profits by giving short change; thus in changing a dollar for rupees they take a few pice as commission, and I believe their business is often very profitable.

Several Hamelidaris arrived from the Irak, some of whom had known Abdul Wahid and his family. A hamelidari is a sort of guide and contractor combined. who earns his living by bringing pilgrims to Mecca, fitting them out with all they require, providing servants, transport, and so on—very much like the "Safari"

out-fitters in East Africa. Many wealthy people, especially non-Arabs, make the pilgrimage in this way; to those unacquainted with the country and language it is both cheaper and pleasanter to travel thus "personally conducted." We soon had quite a large circle of acquaintances among the hamelidaris and the parties they had brought. We gave and went to several dinner parties: ours, thanks to the excellence of Jaffa's cooking, were very successful. At the last and most ambitious of these entertainments we had no less than twelve guests. Among them was a certain Haji Magid, the principal hamelidari of Bagdad, who runs his business on a very large scale, contracting for some hundreds of pilgrims annually, and is considered the leader of the profession. Then there were two Meccan Arabs, friends of mine, the Bagdadie infantry officer, Mohammed Saeed, two Persian merchants who had brought turquoises to Mecca, three other hamelidaris, and two Bussorah Arabs, from among the pilgrims they had brought.

The Persians occupying the rooms above our own kindly lent us their crockery and a servant. We hired another for the evening, as well as extra pipes and many other things we required. Abdul Wahid spent a busy day in making preparations for the feast. The party assembled after the Aesha prayer—about a quarter past eight.* Abd-ur-Rahman, whom I had also asked, unfortunately could not come. Abdul Wahid and I sat at the end of the room to receive the guests, while Masaudi had charge of the active operations. As each arrived he came forward and greeted us—then modestly retired to the other end of the room till told to "come up higher." Hagi Magid and one of the Persians, who was a descendant of the Prophet, were of course given the places of honour on our right and left respectively. Then came the infantry subaltern and one of my Meccans, and the rest anyhow. All having assembled, they were sprayed with rose water and given cigarettes, while an elaborately embroidered table cloth (hired for the occasion) was spread on the floor in the middle of the room. The dishes, as customary, were all brought in at once, and

* In this we were unfashionable. Most people sup after the prayer at sunset.

arranged in concentric circles ; they consisted of pilau, kubabs with tomatoes, baringan, cold chickens, plain roast camel and a sort of soup ; with four different kinds of sweets, macaroons and various cakes, and all the fruit obtainable. The *pièce de résistance* was the pilau, which was composed of *poussins* covered with a mixture of baked rice, nuts, almonds, sultanas, and spices of all sorts.* Iced drinks of various kinds, all of the teetotal variety and equally nasty, were brought as required. When all was ready I gave the signal, we drew up to the tablecloth, and started in with the customary "Bismillahi" (in the name of God). We had of course previously rinsed our hands in water brought round for the purpose. I have no doubt they attributed their having to eat with their fingers to the old-fashioned customs still obtaining in Zanzibar, but the real reason was that I could not run to enough knives and forks for them all.

After dinner pipes were brought, and cigarettes and coffee : we smoked and talked for about an hour, after which our guests departed in a body. This is done in order to save the host the trouble of seeing each one separately to the door.

Hagi Magid was a friend of the Shareef of Mecca, to whom he promised to introduce me. Unfortunately, however, he had to leave for Medina the following day, charged, so it was said, with some secret mission to the tribes, so I never got my introduction, for which I was rather sorry.

Various contradictory rumours were current as to the state of affairs at Medina. According to some accounts an agreement had been concluded between the opposing parties. About the beginning of the new month, the remains of a caravan that had set out three weeks previously returned to Mecca, having been attacked and plundered when almost in sight of Medina. It seemed that the friendly Bedou conducting it had gone forward to reconnoitre, and about half the caravan had followed them, contrary to orders. This half had been

* There is a small ice factory in Mecca, and iced cream, or rather a frozen mixture of tinned milk, dirty water, and cholera germs, is sold in the streets. Alcoholic liquor is obtainable if you know where to go for it.

captured, but the rest succeeded in making their escape, and returned to Mecca. As a result however of the Shareef's intervention, a temporary peace was patched up, but I am unable to say on what terms. No one seemed to think it would last very long.

The appearance of the new moon caused great excitement and much disputation. If it were seen on the first evening after the change it made the day of the journey out to Arafat a Friday—which is considered a peculiarly fortunate event, and the pilgrimage in which it occurs is held to have a value equivalent to seven pilgrimages in ordinary years. It is never quite certain whether or not the crescent will be visible on the day after the new moon, so that there is an element of uncertainty about it that prevents people deliberately choosing any particular year. In this case the question gave rise to an unusually large amount of discussion. Some people were prepared to swear they had actually seen it; others declared that it was impossible. The balance of opinion however inclined to the former statement, which seemed well supported, and eventually the Shareef pronounced in favour of it, much to every one's delight.

All this time immense numbers of pilgrims had been thronging into the city, and the crowd in the streets increased daily. For a week past it had been quite difficult to get about. The Friday prayer in the Haram was really a most imposing ceremony. Scarcely a square yard of the great space remained unoccupied. The uniform movements of this vast concourse during the prayer, and the strange stillness that pervades, appeal strongly to the imagination. During the segeda, that phase of prayer when the forehead is placed on the earth, not a sound but the cooing of the pigeons breaks the brooding silence; then, as the hundred thousand or more worshippers rise to their feet, the rustle of garments and clink of weapons sweeps over the space like a sudden gust. The moment the prayer is over there is a rush to perform the towaf, and a few minutes later the roar of that human whirlpool may be heard at a considerable distance from the Haram.

There are as many pigeons here as in the square of St. Mark's at Venice, and they are nearly as tame. Grain is

sold in the Haram for the purpose of feeding them, but they get so much food one way and another that they can seldom be induced to partake of it. Burton remarks that they are said never to defile the Kaaba as they might be expected to do ; this I believe is perfectly true, whatever the explanation may be.

On the first of the month the "Ihram," a white linen band, was fastened round the black covering of the Kaaba. It remains till the day of the festival, when the "Kiswah," that is the covering itself, is changed. A new kiswah is brought every year with the Egyptian mahmal ; it is sewn in Constantinople and is said to cost £3,600. The material is a mixture of silk and cotton, dull black in colour, and embroidered with the name of God worked in black silk about every square foot. The old one is cut up into pieces of varying sizes, which are sold for the benefit of the upkeep of the mosque and charitable purposes.

The Mosque of the Haram is unique in that it has no "Kibla" or prayer direction. The Kaaba itself being the object to which they turn, the worshippers at prayer form circles round it instead of the usual straight lines looking in the direction of Mecca.

It is possible to enter the Kaaba itself on certain occasions, and I had originally intended to do so. The rules regarding it however are stricter than formerly. Only men of mature age and of particularly blameless repute were allowed to go inside, so Abd-ur-Rahman told me. It was not proper to do so unless prepared to devote the rest of one's life to religious pursuits and renounce thenceforward the world, the flesh, and the devil. Since, however, he had himself been in, the old sinner may have intended this to be facetious. There is nothing whatever inside except a single wooden pillar. It so happened that it was never open when I was present : but Masaudi saw it open on two occasions, on one of which the Shareef and the governor of Mecca entered together and swept out the interior with brooms.

The mahmal arrived from Egypt at the beginning of the month, and with it a large contingent of Egyptian soldiers. It seemed strange to see the familiar khaki uniforms and medal ribbons in this place. I was pleased to see that

MECCA: THE HARAM.

their turn-out was very much smarter than that of the Turkish troops who came afterwards with the Syrian mahmal. It speaks well for British methods that they should have made such good soldiers out of so unwarlike a people as the modern Egyptians. Every one was impressed by the smartness of their uniforms and the precision of their drill.

It was now time to make preparations for the pilgrimage. We should be absent from Mecca for four whole days, and arrangements for transport and food supply had to be made. We agreed that it would not do in the circumstances to be too economical, and that our equipment had better be of a nature suitable to my supposed rank and wealth. We decided to hire three camels and three riding donkeys, and to take on one extra servant and another big tent in which to receive visitors. I gave Abdul Wahid *carte blanche* as regards the commissariat department, and he certainly "did us proud." We had lost the services of Ibrahim because he was performing a "pilgrimage by proxy." According to this idea a pilgrimage may be made on behalf of any dead person, and even in certain cases on behalf of one still living. Having arrived in Mecca and performed the towaf on his own account, the pilgrim must leave the city and change into the Ihram again somewhere outside. Thenceforward he performs all prayers and ceremonies in the name of the person he is representing. Many Sheia sects believe in the efficacy of this.

The institution of the "Hag" is as follows. On a certain fixed day in each year, the 8th of the month of Dhu'lhagga, all grown-up persons in a fit state of health must leave the city before nightfall and proceed to a village called Mina, about five miles to the north. They must pass the night here and go on the following morning to Mount Arafat, nine miles farther, where they must remain till the sun has set; then returning, they sleep at Nimrah, midway between Arafat and Mina. The third day they must get back to Mina in the morning, go through the ceremony of throwing stones at the three "devils," then go on to Mecca, perform the "towaf" and the "saa," and once more return to Mina for the night. The fourth day is the festival and is spent at

Mina. At noon on the fifth they return to Mecca after once more throwing the stones. From the time of leaving Mecca up to the first return there, the Ihram is worn ; but as soon as possible after leaving the Haram on that occasion, it is finally doffed and exchanged for the finest raiment the pilgrim can afford, which should if possible be brand new. Those who complete these ceremonies are thenceforward entitled to the appellation of Hagi before or after their names, and are distinguished in after life by special headgear which varies in different countries. In Egypt they wear green turbans, in Zanzibar the coloured straw hats and white turbans generally worn by the Mutowifs—and so on. I could never make out exactly at what point one becomes a "hagi." According to some, to arrive at Arafat on the appointed day is sufficient to confer the title ; others think it dates from kissing the black stone at the end of the "towaf" ceremony on the third day. A man visiting Mecca outside the pilgrimage season, or one who was prevented by illness from performing these ceremonies on the proper days, would not be entitled to the distinction. The inhabitants of Mecca are not exempted from making the pilgrimage every year. They have to go forth with the rest, so that for two days the city is practically deserted.

It is not possible here to enter into the origin of all these rites, even were I capable of doing so efficiently. Suffice it to say that there is a *raison d'être* for everything. It is frequently contended that much of it is ridiculous ; but precisely the same may be held by the sceptic to apply to any religious function. Like the "Lord's Supper" of the Christians, and the "Passover" of the Jews, these things are done in commemoration of past events and have a symbolical significance. Nothing is easier than to make fun of them all.

The question uppermost in the mind of every one just before the pilgrimage is whether there will be any sickness —that is to say, plague or cholera. In this particular pilgrimage the danger loomed larger than usual, owing to the terrible epidemic of the previous year. It seems that the disease appeared on that occasion about a month before the "Khuroog" (or "going out"), and steadily gained ground ; but it was only after Arafat that it began

to assume the gigantic proportions it finally attained. The pestilence then appeared in its most virulent form, and at Mina and during the succeeding week destroyed at the most generally accepted estimate a thousand a day. The recurrent peril of these devastating epidemics and the immense loss of life caused by them might be met to some extent by stringent regulations, preventing people setting out for Mecca with insufficient means, and by improving the sanitary conditions on the spot. The present quarantine system is useless.

This year, however, conditions were exceptionally favourable; the weather was unusually cool for the season, the number of pilgrims was not so large as usual, and there were fewer of the very poor, who, by camping in the open under most insanitary conditions, are always the focus of infection. So far as was known at the time of the Khuroog, no case of cholera or plague had occurred in Mecca, though two cases of the latter disease had been discovered in Jiddah. The bubonic plague, though equally deadly, is not nearly so much to be feared as cholera,* owing to its comparatively slow rate of progress, and the fact that the multitude gathered together in Mecca, which is the source of danger, disperses almost immediately after the pilgrimage.

. . . . .

A certain number of people left for Mina as early as the Tuesday; by midday on the Wednesday the road to that place, which led close by our house, was blocked by a seemingly endless train of camels, which continued to pass all that night and all the following day. The majority of the shops and markets were closed on Wednesday evening—a few remained open on Thursday morning; but by noon on that day all business had ceased.

We decided to postpone our own exit till as late as possible—that is to say, Thursday evening. By taking up a position on the roof we were able to overlook the road, and a strange sight it presented that day. About two o'clock the Syrian mahmal passed, escorted by a brass band and a regiment, the soldiers, like the rest,

* Should, however, pneumonic plague ever appear here in epidemic form the consequences are likely to be appalling indeed.

now wearing the "Ihram." Shortly afterwards came His Highness Es-seyyid Hussein, the Shareef of Mecca, riding a white horse and followed at a respectful distance by his family, and other dignitaries, also on horseback, and behind them again by a crowd of spearmen mounted on the far-famed racing camels, whose pedigree is almost as long as that of the Shareef himself. As he passed the bystanders saluted him with low "salaams," which I observed he was very careful to acknowledge. Though attired in nothing but bath towels, he yet managed to look perfectly dignified.

The Egyptian mahmal and its cortège passed a little later to the tune of the "Barren Rocks of Aden," and was followed by several Turkish regiments with colours flying and bands playing.

CHAPTER IX

THE PILGRIMAGE

At about five o'clock we ourselves donned the Ihram after making our "nia," or formal vow to perform the pilgrimage. Our luggage and servants had been sent on in the morning, and we hoped to find all in readiness on our arrival.

We mounted our donkeys, fine big animals well over eleven hands, I should say, and rode out accompanied by the hamelidari we were employing, Jaffa by name, his son, and the three Persians who had been occupying the rooms above our own suite. Progress was slow at first owing to the narrowness of the way ; but on leaving the town, the road broadened out, and we got along faster, and were able to canter part of the way. The road rises gently between low stony kopjes ; it is paved in some places, but elsewhere not even metalled. We reached Mina shortly after dark, and found Jaffa, our cook, awaiting us on the road.

We were conducted to our tents, which we found had been pitched a short distance beyond, on the outskirts of the great encampment, not far from the blaze of torches that indicated the quarters of the Shareef. We dined in comfort, and afterwards listened to a reading by the leader of our Persian acquaintances, who was a descendant of the Prophet, and by way of being a learned man. Strictly speaking, we ought to have gone to the mosque of Mina for the Aesha prayer, but few people do so nowadays. One would run a very good chance of losing one's self for one thing, and this is none too safe a place after dark. We turned in early, knowing that the next day would tax all our endurance.

We struck camp at dawn and sent the servants and tents forward with the camels. I never expected to find

them again ; but Jaffa, our hamelidari, who had now taken charge, seemed quite confident about it. We ourselves went into Mina and waited a couple of hours in a café there before going forward. We finally started about eight o'clock. The road leaving the village runs due east, and is on the average about half a mile wide, except in two places where it passes through defiles and narrows down to a couple of hundred yards. After riding for about an hour, we halted at one of the many refreshment booths pitched at intervals along the road and had some breakfast.

To do justice to the extraordinary scene would require a descriptive skill that I do not possess. The best idea of what it is like will be gained by considering that at least half a million people are traversing these nine miles of road between sunrise and ten o'clock this day ; that about half of them are mounted, and that many of them possess baggage-animals as well. The roar of this great column is like a breaking sea, and the dust spreads for miles over the surrounding country. When, passing through the second defile, we came in sight of Arafat itself, the spectacle was stranger still. The hill was literally black with people, and tents were springing up round it, hundreds to the minute, in an ever-widening circle. As we approached, the dull murmur caused by thousands of people shouting the formula, "Lebéka lebéka, Allahooma lebéka," which had long been audible, became so loud that it dominated every other sound. In the distance it had sounded rather ominous, suggestive of some deep disturbance of great power, like the rumble of an earthquake.

Mount Arafat is a hill about four hundred feet in height, pyramidical in shape, and strewn with great boulders. At the base of it are the springs which feed the conduit leading to Mecca. On the summit there is a paved platform surmounted by a stone beacon. The surrounding country is rough and mountainous, especially to the east, but Arafat itself stands isolated in the middle of a level, scrub-covered plain. The camp is formed round the hill on the flat, and covers many square miles.

Thanks to the excellence of Jaffa's arrangements and the punctuality with which his orders had been carried

out, we found our tents almost at once. Their position was on the very border of the camp—the best place, for many reasons—and several of our acquaintances were congregated in the same neighbourhood. Every one was in the best of spirits, and there was nothing in their demeanour to denote that the assembly had any religious significance. It was more suggestive of a gigantic picnic-party than anything else.

We rested an hour in the shade of our tent and then ascended the hill to pray the customary two rukkas on the platform on top. The whole of the pilgrimage was now assembled, and the view from the summit gave an idea of the vast number present. It was curious to reflect that the day before this hill was silent and deserted, as it would be again to-morrow, and as it would remain till each succeeding year brought round the "day of Arafat." In fact, it would be almost impossible for any small party to get here at all on any other day, so infested with robbers is this part of the country.

The hour of the midday prayer arrived while we were on the summit. A salute of sixty-three guns was fired, numerous bands struck up, and the crowd cheered themselves hoarse. There were in all three six-gun batteries present, and two mountain guns carried on mules.

Descending the mountain, we inspected some large tanks filled by the springs, in which many people were bathing. The water was very dirty, and the flanks of the hill, where many thousands of the poorer pilgrims were seeking shelter among the rocks, were in a horribly dirty condition. It is not surprising that infectious diseases spread rapidly amid such surroundings; the astonishing thing is that cholera, once started, does not make a clean sweep of the whole pilgrimage.

A market had been established, where food of various sorts was being sold, and there were also a number of refreshment tents where drinks and so on were obtainable. We strolled about for some time; but finding the midday sun on our bare heads rather trying, we returned to lunch in our tent.

A rumour that had been current earlier in the day now received confirmation. It appeared that the Sheie sect was dissatisfied with the Shareef's ruling about the new

moon, and had come to the conclusion that this day was not the ninth of the month, but the eighth, and that, consequently, the proceedings were null and void. They therefore decided to stay the night at Arafat, and remain there the following day till sundown.

It was difficult to believe that sensible, educated men such as the Persian Sheia we had met could acquiesce in such "pig-headed" behaviour. The Persian mind is always difficult to fathom. Though more civilized in many ways than the Arabs, they are at the same time more fanatical and less reasonable in their religious beliefs. One of their favourite pursuits is the recital of the "Death of Hussein," which is read or repeated by some elder among them while the remainder sit round and positively *howl* with grief. It is all worked out; as the story reaches a certain point you must sniffle, a little later burst into tears, and so on. No one attempts to defend the murder of Hussein, which is really a most tragic story; but the other sects of Islam rightly regard this sort of thing as nonsense. Some of the Sheia sects have all sorts of strange customs in the month of Muharram: among other things they beat themselves and cut their heads with knives, and generally behave more like Red Indians than a civilized and cultured Asiatic race.

The weakness of Islam as a political force at the present day is due very largely to this quarrel over the rights and wrongs of men who died and were buried more than a thousand years ago. Preposterous as it all may seem, it must yet be borne in mind that Christendom to-day is profoundly divided over such questions as transubstantiation and the infallibility of the Pope, which appear just as ridiculous in Moslem eyes.

In consequence of this decision of their chiefs the whole of the Sheie division, amounting to perhaps a quarter of the total pilgrimage, remained behind when the rest returned to Nimrah. The tents were struck and the camels loaded up in good time, but no one might start back till the sun had actually set. When the Shareef finally gave the signal, a salute of guns was fired, and a few minutes later the great multitude was streaming across the plain and converging on the first of the two defiles we had to pass. There was a tremendous crush in the

narrower parts and considerable risk to life and limb; but we managed to keep our party together and escape disaster. A ride of two hours brought us opposite the mosque of Nimrah, where we camped but did not pitch tents. The whole of the pilgrimage had not assembled by midnight, and the noise and dust would have rendered sleep impossible had we been less tired.

We started for Mina before sunrise and got there by about half-past seven. We were fortunate in securing a very good place for our tents, not far from the Shareef's pavilion and army headquarters. The first thing we had to do was to stone the three devils. The previous evening Jaffa and Masaudi had collected pebbles for this purpose—for they have to be brought from Nimrah—sixty-three of them for each person. The devils are known respectively as the "big devil," the "little devil," and the "middling devil," and they mark the positions of pre-Islamic idols which were destroyed by the Prophet. The ceremony of stoning them is of course intended to symbolize contempt and derision for all such heathen gods. I believe that it originated in the difficulty the Prophet found in completely eradicating the old superstitions, for though the people had renounced their former gods, they were still a little afraid of them, and not inclined to be too disrespectful at first. He therefore made his followers throw stones at the old idols in order to convince them of the absurdity of their fears.

The first two "devils" are in the main street of Mina, the third a little way down on the right of the road going to Mecca. They consist of stone pillars, and stand in a sort of basin like the basin of a fountain. All of them, by the time we got there, were surrounded by a surging crowd topped by waving arms and obscured in a perfect haze of stones. It was long before we could get within shot at all, and in the end we had to discharge our missiles at long range with the result that most of mine, I am afraid, fell short. There is no necessity to hit the target, but if you go short or over it you are bound to hit somebody in the crowd. Enthusiasts who get too close frequently have a very bad time; a man standing close to me had his cheek laid open, and Masaudi got a cut on the ear.

So dense was the crowd in the streets that it took us

more than an hour to get through the stoning ceremony, and the sun was high before we got back to the tent. We rested awhile and breakfasted before going out again to perform the sacrifice. Every pilgrim must this day sacrifice an animal of some sort, and a sheep or goat is usually chosen. The meat may be eaten, or preferably given to the poor. When this rule was made by the Prophet he probably did not conceive the enormous dimensions the Hag would eventually attain, for nowadays this immense number of animals is quite uselessly destroyed. Formerly the carcasses were allowed to rot on the ground, with the result that Mina for some time afterwards was practically uninhabitable. Of late years, however, large pits have been dug for their reception, which are filled in at the end of the day. In consequence of the last year's cholera epidemic unusual precautions were taken on this occasion. The animals had all been collected together at a certain spot about a quarter of a mile from our tent. Each beast as it was sacrificed had to be taken away at once or else thrown into one of the pits, and no one was allowed to take away any live animals. This was intended to prevent slaughtering in the camp, with its attendant dangers to health. Numerous guards had been posted to enforce due fulfilment of these very excellent regulations, which were however rather irksome. We wanted some meat, and it is much easier to drive a live animal a quarter of a mile than to carry a dead one. The son of our hamelidari Jaffa, and myself, lighted upon a peculiarly fat sheep, which we decided to take home ; and as we did not fancy carrying it we bribed a sentry to let us through. Unfortunately on the way back we attracted the attention of one of the doctors in charge of the sanitary arrangements, who galloped up on horseback, and after abusing us roundly made us take it back, and promised us a dose of "koorbag" if we tried it on again, which I confess I think we quite deserved. We eventually had to send the servants to bring meat.

The sheep cost from a dollar upwards, and are sold by the Bedou shepherds from the surrounding country, who must make a very good thing out of it. At least half a million are sacrificed annually on this day.

An incident that Jaffa witnessed here the year before illustrates the state of insecurity in this country. A Turk had bought a sheep, and in the act of paying for it took off a money-belt heavy with coin. The Bedoui made a sudden snatch at it, caught one end, and tried to pull it away. The Turk hung on gamely, but the other, drawing his dagger, completely disembowelled him with a single downward stroke, and taking the belt escaped through the crowd. And this took place in the midst of a camp of half a million people, with pickets posted and sentries standing by! Some of the latter fired at the robber, but merely succeeded in killing a bystander. Once away among the hills nothing could touch him—pursuit was out of the question.

Having slain our victims, which by the way it is unnecessary to do with one's own hand, our business at Mina was over for the day, and we could go on to Mecca. Our donkeys being brought, we started directly after the noonday prayer. The road was of course very crowded, and for the first half-hour we had to move at a snail's pace.

The appearance of the city was strange indeed: everything was closed, the shops and houses were barred and bolted, yet the streets were full of people. Hot and dusty, we reached the Haram, engaged a Mutowif and performed the towaf, this time all three together. We had considerable difficulty in kissing the black stone. The Kaaba was now dressed in its new covering, and the hole left for the purpose had not yet been widened sufficiently to admit more than one head at a time. A crowd of Bedou Arabs surrounded it, amongst whom we pushed our way, Masaudi and I, for Abdul Wahid was not for risking broken ribs in the crush. The whole thing resembled what we used to call a "loose hot" at Winchester football. At last I got my head through, getting it violently bumped in the process, kissed the stone, and emerged from the throng minus the shoulder-cloth of my Ihram and a good deal of skin belonging to different parts of my anatomy. I was more fortunate than one man, who lost his loin cloth as well and came out stark naked, much to the delight of bystanders. Masaudi having retrieved my garment we passed out to perform

the "saa" between Safa and Marawa. This was merely a repetition of what we had done on our arrival, but it took longer owing to the number of people: at times we were unable to move forward. The different parts of the prayer yelled out by the Mutowifs in charge of each party, the endeavours of the pilgrims to follow correctly, the complaints of women jostled in the throng, and the imprecations of the men, form a curious medley: "Oh God, Thou knowest—what we know not—Slowly there! damn your ancestors!—keep us in the straight road"—and so on. One man, an Indian, who had seemingly lost his Mutowif, jogged along behind us for some time bleating like a lost sheep, "Oh God, keep me among the wicked men." What he was trying to say meant of course precisely the opposite.

Having concluded the seventh turn, we were taken before an elderly sheikh armed with a razor who, after inquiring my name and sect, proceeded to shave about a square inch of hair off my right temple, declaiming the while a prayer which I had to repeat after him. This was the formal vow to quit the state of Ihram and resume the normal secular condition. His work completed, he invoked a blessing and went on to do the same for Masaudi. Having paid him and the Mutowif for their services, we returned to our house on foot, as the donkeys had gone off to get a well-earned feed.

A black slave had been left in charge of the house, and we were the first to return, for the Persian contingent was still at Arafat. We had some difficulty in getting water for the baths we were longing for, as a famine had set in owing to some obstruction in the conduit. We had at last to pay a rupee for two skins-full. With a sigh of relief I finally laid aside the Ihram, which henceforward might be used for bath towels without impropriety—though some people, having first washed it in water from the holy well, prefer to keep it among their household treasures in memory of this great occasion. Certainly it is a most draughty and uncomfortable costume, and in so far as it is intended as a penance abundantly serves its purpose. My back was raw from exposure to the sun, and even my head somewhat blistered.

We had now to dress ourselves in the best clothes we

possessed, and we were all provided with new suits for the occasion in accordance with the accepted custom. This is done partly in honour of the festival, and partly because the new-made Hagi is believed to start with a clean "defaulter sheet," all his previous sins and errors being completely remitted, and the new clothes are held symbolical of his spiritual condition. The completion of the Hag is therefore the appropriate moment for making new resolutions, breaking off old habits, and so on.

I had white cloth robes, a black jubba, and gold sash, with a dagger; Masaudi was somewhat elaborately attired in the "Kanzu" of Zanzibar, a regimental Mess waistcoat (pattern obsolete, needless to say, as it was several years since I had paid about £10 for it), and a gold-embroidered "joho"—a garment peculiar to Muscat and its former dependencies. Abdul Wahid looked peculiarly bilious in a yellow Kuftan he had bought in Damascus.

Our donkeys having been brought, we rode back to Mina, starting just before sundown. We had not gone far when Masaudi "took a toss" which somewhat marred the beauty of his appearance, and was immediately followed by Abdul Wahid, that being his seventh in the three days. The wretched donkeys were dead beat, and could hardly keep their feet even at a walk. When we started to canter I fell off. The Arabian donkeys are given neither saddle nor stirrups, but a pile of cloths, often elaborately embroidered, is strapped across their backs, which is really much more comfortable, but difficult to hold on to, especially when compelled by one's costume to ride side-saddle.

We reached Mina just as the salute of guns was announcing the hour of the Aesha prayer. Twenty-one guns are fired by each battery at each of the five daily prayers during the days of the festival. Being very tired, we turned in directly after dinner.

Our tent was a large one, about fifteen feet in diameter. The three of us—Abdul Wahid, Masaudi, and myself—slept with our feet toward the pole and our heads outwards—like spokes of a wheel. In the middle we had collected what little luggage we had brought out and a few other odd belongings. The principal thing was a

brown bag containing about £5 in gold, a beautifully bound Koran I had bought for thirty shillings two days before the "Khuroog," a string of amber beads, and a couple of spare pistols. We seem to have slept heavily that night, for when Masaudi, the first to awake, looked round next morning the bag was gone, and so were several other things, including his beautiful new turban. Some tracks in the sand and a round hole in the fly of the tent remained to show how the thief had come upon us. There was of course nothing to be done, but the incident serves to illustrate the daring of these robbers. To break into a tent where three armed men are sleeping in the middle of a well-guarded camp and abstract their belongings is no mean feat. As a matter of fact we probably came well out of it, for had one of us stirred while the thief was in the tent a knife-thrust would probably have prolonged his sleep to the Day of Judgment. This is how people who live in such places acquire the habit, as many notice, of remaining quite motionless when they are waking from sleep until they have become completely conscious of their surroundings. It is unsafe to touch an Arab of the desert in order to wake him. Of course, had we been so fortunate as to catch the thief in the act, he would have been shot on the instant. We had frequently been warned of these dangers, and never slept without weapons ready to hand.

On our way out we had passed a party of nineteen thieves chained together on their way to Mecca. Of these six were shot, and the remainder had their right hands cut off. This latter method of punishment is sometimes considered barbarous by Europeans, but is endorsed by all reasonable people in these countries. Violent remedies are necessary when dealing with dangerous diseases.

The loss of the bag was really most annoying, as I could not afford to replace the things. This was the nineteenth "sibhah" (string of beads) that I had lost on the journey. It is a failing of mine to leave them about in all sorts of places, and it had become quite a standing joke with Masaudi.

This, the Sunday, was the day of the festival. Every one was dressed in his smartest clothes, and the whole camp presented a very picturesque appearance. In

the morning we went to see the presentation of gifts to the Shareef. His camp, which was on an artificially raised platform, comprised four huge marquees and many smaller tents. Lines of troops formed a passage and kept back the crowd. Bands paraded up and down the open space left between. The various grandees present arrived one after the other with their proper escorts, and were received by the Shareef seated on a dais at the far end of the largest marquee. They included envoys from Moslem countries, the governor of Mecca, some minor Mohammedan potentates from India and elsewhere, and other people of consequence. When all were assembled and seated, the Turkish Ambassador arrived with the Sultan's present carried on a gold dish. I cannot say of what the gift consisted, as it was covered with a cloth, but I was told that a few thousand in cash is the form it generally takes. The Shareef came to the edge of the platform to receive this visitor and escorted him within.

As soon as this ceremony was over, and the Turkish Ambassador had ridden away, the principal Meccans and pilgrims from foreign countries wishing to salute the Shareef passed in. He held in fact a sort of levée to which every one was admitted who cared to go. Masaudi went, but I declined to do so, fearing possible questions about myself which might be awkward.

The present Shareef, Seyyid Hussein, is a very popular man. He had then comparatively recently assumed office, having succeeded his brother therein, who was deposed by the Turkish Government. From what I could see he fully deserves the estimation in which he is held. While quite alive to the dignity of his position, he endeavours to revive the old traditions of the Prophet and the earlier Caliphs, who were accessible to all and sundry, and put into actual practice the theory of equality and fraternity inculcated by the Koran. The Shareefs who preceded Seyyid Hussein would allow no one to sit down in their presence, and were apt to treat their inferiors as so much dirt.

We were sitting in our tent smoking and listening to Masaudi's account of the levée, when we came within a little of complete disaster. The wall of our tent was down, as usual in the heat of the day, and we ourselves

were squatting on the carpet. I heard a sudden exclamation from Masaudi, and saw him staring fixed and motionless over my shoulder. Looking round, I saw the cause of his behaviour. Standing within a few feet of us, and looking straight into our tent, were three of the Mombasa Swahilis whom we had encountered at Medina, together with Kepi and another man I did not know. It did not seem possible that they could miss seeing Masaudi, and if they did it was certain that they would come into the tent to greet him, when one of them at least was almost bound to recognize me. Escape was impossible, and I thought we were done. The morning sun, however, was shining right in their eyes: they saw nothing, and after a moment's pause passed on. As they turned their backs both Masaudi and I ran out of the tent at opposite sides and mingled with the crowd.

I had known of the arrival of these people, for Masaudi had ascertained that they had come with the Syrian mahmal. Here in Mina, among the vast crowd of pilgrims, the chances of meeting them had appeared infinitesimal, and I had relaxed all precautions as regards being seen about with Masaudi. I cannot say what would have happened if they had seen me. We were by no means at the end of our resources, and I have no doubt we should have found some way to keep them quiet; all the same we had very good cause to be thankful that the necessity for doing so did not arise.

Although I was not presented to the Shareef, I got an invitation for "self and party" to join his following at prayer. This is extended to large numbers of respectable pilgrims, and we probably owed it to some of our Meccan friends, or perhaps to the hamelidaris.

During the afternoon we received visitors, who came to wish us what corresponds to a "Merry Christmas," and to congratulate Haji Ali and Haji Masaudi on their successfully accomplished pilgrimage. The chief topic of conversation is the colour of the flag flying over the quarantine station. A red flag means that all is well; but if it changes to yellow it signifies that cholera or plague has broken out. This affects all alike, for, apart from the danger, they are bound to suffer from vexatious quarantine restrictions wherever they may subsequently

go. If, on the other hand, the Hag is "clean," these restrictions are generally much relaxed.

In the evening we walked into the village and once more stoned the "devils." We met the Shareef and his party returning from that ceremony. All were now most gorgeously apparelled ; the Shareef and the other Arabs in gold-embroidered robes, the Turks in their uniforms, and the foreign visitors in their national costumes.

The Bedou camel-guards, who always accompany the Shareef, are a very fine-looking body of men. The camels themselves are of a particular breed renowned for its speed and beauty, and as different in appearance from the ordinary camel as the Derby winner from a dray-horse. They carry the mails from Mecca to Jiddah in a little over three hours. It is a fine sight to see an Arab spearman mounted on his camel, when both are fully equipped, though how they manage to stick on when going at full speed I cannot imagine.

I inquired whether it would be possible to buy one, and was told it might be done with some trouble, but the price for a young camel of the very best breed might be anything up to £150. A really first-class riding-camel, however, not absolutely thoroughbred, might be bought for about £50.

After the stone-throwing, we visited the mosque of Mina, which is not particularly interesting. The square was full of poor people camping there, and very dirty ; the year before it had been full of dead and dying, and was a regular hotbed of infection. It is very odd that people should be allowed to defile the place in the disgusting manner they do. Many have been the complaints about it for years past, but nothing is done.

In the evening there were fireworks, more remarkable for quantity than quality, with much singing and band-playing, which continued to a late hour.

The following was the day of the "rugoo," or return to Mecca ; but none might leave Mina till after the noon-tide prayer. The hour was saluted by ninety guns, and immediately there was a rush to get off. The narrow streets of Mina were soon almost impassable, and many were injured in the crush. We three started together on our donkeys, but soon got separated. Abdul Wahid

had a narrow escape, his donkey being knocked off its legs, and he himself thrown under a camel, which passed right over him, fortunately without treading on him. We had once more to throw the stones, which in the circumstances was more difficult and dangerous than ever. We left Mina at a quarter to one, but did not reach our house till nearly five o'clock. Abdul Wahid was the first to arrive and Masaudi the last, owing to his being thrown and losing his donkey in the turmoil. I was the most fortunate, for I came through scatheless. Our camels did not arrive till nightfall; but in view of the state of the road, we were lucky to get them when we did.

The reason for this inconvenient and dangerous rush is to be found in an old rule that pilgrims must leave Mina after noonday and before sundown. This was all very well when they numbered a few thousands; but compliance with it now is really quite absurd. Every year many people are injured to no purpose. The same applies to many of the other rites, such as the wasteful sacrifice on the third day. If the money so uselessly expended were given in charity or spent on public works, it would surely be better; or if the animals must be killed, they might be distributed throughout the year, and be sufficient to feed all the poor in Arabia. The Prophet obviously never intended the sacrifice to become the public danger it is now; more likely it was meant to ensure provision for all on the day of the festival.

. . . . .

The return to Mecca concluded the pilgrimage, and I shall pass over the remainder of the time we spent there in a few words. I was rather disappointed to find that we could not leave, as we had intended, on the following day. The objection was that the majority of the troops holding the forts and blockhouses on the road to Jiddah had been drafted into Mecca for the week, and the road, left unguarded, was in consequence unsafe. I was all for taking our chance and riding through, but strict orders had been issued that no one was to leave the city until formal permission was granted; and I was assured we should be stopped and sent back if we attempted to do so. This was perfectly right, for the danger is by no means imaginary, and the Government are justified in

taking what measures they think fit to ensure the pilgrim's safety, on which their own credit depends ; but it was inconvenient all the same. Nothing more remained to be done : we had seen all there was to see, and I had good reasons for disliking the delay. To make matters worse, the governor decided that the absence of disease in the city justified him in granting his hard-worked men a couple of days' rest before sending them back to their posts. Had there been cholera the authorities would have been at pains, of course, to get rid of the pilgrims as quickly as possible ; but this year there was no particular necessity to do so.

The end of it was that we had to wait six days more, which we spent not unpleasantly on the whole ; in fact, but for my anxiety to get away, I should have enjoyed it. We had by now made many friends, and I no longer felt a stranger or compelled to stand on ceremony as at first. I bought one or two things as mementoes with my fast-diminishing stock of money, among them a rather nice carpet which had been brought from Bagdad by one of the hamelidaris. This was in reality a present, but the sort of present that one can only accept on condition that the giver takes one in return, which, of course, has to be of equal or superior value.

I was rather horrified to find what it had all cost. What with the hire of donkeys, camels, tents, and servants, the fee I had to pay the hamelidari for his services—which were very well worth the money—and many minor expenses incidental to the pilgrimage, the bill was not a short one. When all was settled up, I had barely £20 left with which to get my party back to Jiddah, and from there to our various destinations. Masaudi had expended the whole of his small savings in charitable donations, and Abdul Wahid had got rid of all he had brought long before in presents intended for friends in Germany, so that I could look for no help from them. I could perhaps have borrowed the money, but I preferred to take my chance of "raising the wind" in Jiddah. Kepi bade fair to add another unnecessary expense ; but having promised to take him, I was determined to do so.

The only notable incident that occurred during this period was the arrest and imprisonment of the whole

of the hamelidari contingent from Bagdad. I could never quite make out what the trouble was about, but it was something to do with their having infringed the Government regulations with regard to the hire of camels from the Bedou. They were all released before we left. A considerable number of pilgrims were bound for Medina, including most of the Persians, who had wisely deferred their visit to that place till after the Hag. I have no doubt our friend Hamza made a good thing out of them when they got there. We, having already "done" Medina, were frequently asked for advice about lodgings, etc., and had much pleasure in recommending Iman's establishment.

At last, on the Friday evening, the crier announced that travellers to Jiddah might leave when they pleased. We had made all our arrangements beforehand, so were able to get away at daybreak the following morning. For a variety of reasons, I had determined to ride through with Abdul Wahid on donkeys, leaving Masaudi to follow with Kepi and our luggage on three camels. I knew that every day would make a difference as regards certain arrangements I had made to meet my brother in Egypt, and hoped by arriving at Jiddah among the first that I should be able to have all in readiness to embark directly Masaudi arrived.

Kepi had been warned to be ready for some days past, and Masaudi brought him to the house that night. It took him some little time to recognize me, but he did eventually, when we were together in Jiddah. We engaged an Arab friend of Jaffa's who was in poor circumstances to accompany Masaudi, for which we agreed to pay him one dollar, and give him a camel to ride. This I thought advisable because he knew the ropes, which Masaudi did not, and indeed it was fortunate that I took this precaution, as otherwise they might have been delayed for days. The camel-men, as we knew by experience, are a set of thieves of the worst description, and will raise all sorts of difficulties if they think there is the smallest profit to be derived from so doing.

We paid our farewell visits to the Haram at different times that night, for we were busy packing and making our final arrangements for leaving. We paid off Jaffa

the cook, and Ibrahim, our other servant, and were glad to hear that they had found work with a party returning to Medina. Both had turned out very well, and the memory of Jaffa's cooking makes me want to travel in Persia. I had supplemented our depleted exchequer by selling my rifle and the various articles of camp-equipment, for which we had no further use.

In the morning we waited till Masaudi's camels were loaded up and fairly under way, then, after bidding good-bye to Mohammed Saeed and promising to stay with him next time we came, we started ourselves. Our two donkeys were remarkably fine animals, clipped in a curious fashion peculiar to Mecca, and very well cared for. The Bedoui in charge of them rode a somewhat smaller beast, and, as usual, made himself as much of a nuisance as possible in the time at his disposal. I had to pay £1 apiece for these donkeys, but as we hoped to get through in one day, it was worth the money.

The first trouble arose in connection with the passes we had to obtain for the donkeys, and in consequence of an elaborate and carefully thought out scheme on the part of our donkey-boy to swindle us out of two rupees. I was for paying and getting on, but Abdul Wahid, though not cast in an heroic mould, as may have become apparent in the course of this narrative, would, I believe, cheerfully suffer martyrdom rather than be done out of a single "nuhass." We argued and finally appealed to the sheikh, who sent us on to the Mudir, who was not in, and so on. Altogether we lost about an hour.

Getting started once more, we rode up the long, straight street by which we had entered the town, passed the guard, who inspected our papers, and found ourselves at last on the high road heading for home.

I enjoyed the first part of that ride : the morning air was sweet and cool, our donkeys were fresh, and the pace was good. Moreover, it was pleasant to reflect that this was the final stage of an enterprise which had been an almost unqualified success ; in front lay rest and safety, while the dangers and hardships were all behind. As I recalled our experiences I could not help seeing how much that success was due to sheer good luck, and how thankful I ought to be that nothing had gone amiss.

Early though we had started we had been by no means the first to leave Mecca. Many of the pilgrims had left during the night, and also the Egyptian mahmal, which we passed near Bahreia. We were told that it was going by sea to Yembu and thence to Medina. In ordinary years it journeys from Cairo overland, visiting Medina before the Hag; but the usual route had been altered on this occasion owing to the disturbed state of the country.

About midday we reached Bahreia, where we lunched and rested an hour. On restarting we found that we had passed all the camels that had set out before us, and were now riding along an empty road. Catching up with a party of eight Jiddah merchants, also on donkeys, we decided to keep with them by way of precaution against possible robbers. Though the road was now garrisoned in the usual manner it was still unsafe for small parties, especially about dusk. We continued, between walking and cantering, to make an easy six miles an hour, till just before sundown we emerged from the foot-hills and saw before us across the plain the white minarets of Jiddah. It was now good going, and we calculated on entering the town before it was quite dark. Our donkeys seemed to recognize their goal, and started forward at a smart canter. A disappointment however was in store for us: as we neared one of the fortified posts a soldier ran out and, planting himself in the road with outstretched arms, brought us to a halt. He told us that strict orders had been issued that no one was to travel after dark, and that we must sleep where we were, under the protection of the blockhouse. We naturally protested vigorously, but to no purpose; the N.C.O. in charge who came out in response to our summons said his orders were explicit. We tried bribery, but it was no good—for once in a way. Finally at my suggestion he consented to let us go forward if we would sign a paper saying that we did so entirely at our own risk and against his advice; this we quickly wrote out and signed, but before it was ready he had changed his mind again and absolutely forbade us to move on pain of being fired on by his men. Getting held up like this did not so very much matter to us, but it was very annoying for the Jiddah men, who had doubtless com-

fortable homes and good dinners waiting for them an hour away. Some of us were in favour of running the blockade : we did not believe they would really shoot or that they would hit anything if they did. However we were out-voted, and in the end had to make the best of it and bivouac where we were. There was a small shed in which lived an old Bedoui woman who sold coffee to travellers, and kept beside a few provisions—some eggs and a little very stale bread. Abdul Wahid, displaying his sound business instinct, took advantage of our altercation with the N.C.O. to "corner" the whole supply, with the result that he and I fared comparatively well. Before turning in we had a conversation with one of the soldiers, who told us that a donkey boy leaving Jiddah that morning had been shot dead by a highwayman close to this fort. The robbers' usual method is to "snipe" the travellers from a range of two hundred or three hundred yards, and when they make a hit gallop in and plunder their victim, taking their chance of being observed and fired on by any blockhouses within range. It would be a great improvement if double the number of these blockhouses were constructed, and as they might well be of smaller size no great extravagance would be involved. The posts at present are too far apart, and consequently do not serve their purpose so efficiently as they might do. This soldier's description of the life they led in these small garrisons reminded me of South Africa.

After spending a cold and uncomfortable night we started as soon as it got light and entered Jiddah before sunrise. We went first to our former lodgings, and found that the landlord had gone to Mecca, but had left a message that we could have the rooms if we wanted them. We put our things there in the cleanest place we could find, for since the owner had left a fortnight before, the rooms apparently had been neither swept nor garnished. Dust accumulates quickly in Jiddah, and so do other things, as I was shortly to discover. A feeling of discomfort in that region caused me to examine my legs and ankles—to find a crawling mass of fleas ascending in a phalanx ! I took to flight promptly and, seeking the nearest chemist, bought a large quantity of the local version of Keating's : but all the insecticides known to

science would not have saved me from being badly bitten. Abdul Wahid, having retrieved our things, joined me, and we breakfasted with our old friend the Christian restaurant-keeper, and then made a round to find fresh accommodation. At last we came upon a decently clean room that seemed suitable, though we had to pay an inconveniently long price for it. However, I began to realize that the money I had left would in any case be insufficient to get us home, and as more must therefore be raised somehow, I ceased to bother about further economies.

It was not however till we began to go into the question of passages that we realized how very awkward it was going to be. We had heard in Mecca a rumour which had seemed to us incredible, to the effect that no pilgrims other than those of Egyptian origin, and furnished with Egyptian passports, would be allowed to enter Egypt till after the return of the mahmal, that is to say, for about another two months. To our consternation this turned out to be perfectly true. The steamship agents declined to sell us tickets to any Egyptian port, or, more politely, warned us that we should be foolish to buy them as we were certain to be sent back if we attempted to land there. We consulted an old Turkish officer sitting outside a café, explaining that we had urgent business in Egypt, and asking his advice as to how we were to get there. He said he only knew of two ways: one was to buy passports from some poor Egyptian pilgrims, which could easily be done, and travel disguised as Egyptians; but he shook his head over our chances of imposing on the landing authorities. We neither of us looked the least like natives of that country. The other way, he said, was to go to Beyrout, change our passports for others without the Mecca endorsement, and from there make our way to Port Said. He said the authorities would readily connive at this, as they were disgusted with these restrictions. The objection was that we should be in quarantine for ten days at Tor, four at Beyrout, and four more at Port Said, which was an appalling prospect—and would beside ruin a shooting trip in the Sudan that I had planned with my brother.

Masaudi did not turn up, and I began to get rather

anxious about him. We were also very uncomfortable without the luggage, being badly in need of a wash and change. We spent the time smoking in the cafés and trying to devise some practicable scheme for getting into Egypt. One that we considered, was to go down to Aden, and there change into a P. and O. or other homeward-bound ship. The objections to this were quarantine and lack of funds. I then thought of going straight across to Suakim, but it turned out that there was no boat for a fortnight, and that we should be at least ten days more in quarantine there, added to which the Sudan contingent of pilgrims, mostly African negroes, are not the most desirable travelling companions. Had I been possessed of sufficient ready money I might have chartered a dhow and sailed over, concocting on the way some fairy tale for the benefit of the port authorities on the other side.

Masaudi arrived on the afternoon of the second day. The machinations of the camel-men, who had started their little games the moment our backs were turned, had been the cause of many hours' delay. They had demanded the whole of the fare before leaving Mecca, and had actually offloaded the camels on compliance being refused. Masaudi was in favour of teaching them manners with his sword, but the Arab we had engaged showed very good sense, himself assisted in undoing the ropes and, declining to take the camels at all, went off to the Mudir, who arrested the delinquents and made them return the money that they had already received, and (I hope) ordered them twenty-five of the best as a memento of the incident.

It thus became necessary to find a new lot and make a fresh agreement—all of which took time. But in any case I was far too relieved to see him safe to have grumbled at the delay even had it been his fault.

The story of our journey may well close at this point. We separated at Jiddah. Masaudi and Kepi went to Mombasa, Abdul Wahid to Persia, and I myself to Egypt. The difficulty about the quarantine was successfully overcome in the end. This was in no way attributable to my own ingenuity, but was due entirely to the kindness of a fellow-countryman.

It may occur to the reader who has done me the honour

to follow me thus far that the inhabitants of the holy cities and the others we associated with in the course of these four months must have been of singularly unobservant disposition, or that I myself must be a past master in the art of deception. Neither however is the case ; my success in imposing on those we met is to be explained by their ignorance and lack of interest in the outside world, even in that part of it which professes Islam. There are so many different sects in Islam, and its adherents are found in so many different countries, that I seriously believe that if some one invented for himself a country and a language that do not exist at all, and journeyed thus to Mecca, no one there would know enough geography to find him out. Yet withal they are quick enough in their way, and if some Mutowif would take the trouble to write a book on ethnography in its relation to the Islam of to-day, and classify the different races that come to Mecca—such a deception as I practised would become impossible. But no works of reference exist, and the excellent school-books published by the Beyrout press are generally neglected by Moslem Arabs, who manifest indifference, and even contempt, for knowledge in every form except that of languages. Their idea of a learned man is an able linguist. This was not the intention of the Prophet, who said, "Seek knowledge, if you have to go to China for it."

This is meant only as a generalization, and so is the bad character I have given them in other respects. There are many exceptions. Well-informed and energetic men are to be found in Mecca, and so likewise are men who live upright and sober lives. Not every Meccan is hopelessly depraved, nor will every Mutowif take "*une vessie pour une lanterne.*"

We did, as I have related, occasionally excite some suspicion. Our two servants, in spite of the fact that both were Persians and knew little Arabic, must have had their doubts. Had these suspicions ever become anything more definite we should have heard about it fast enough in the shape, probably, of an extravagant demand for "hush money." It must be remembered that very great credit would accrue to any one who might discover and denounce an "unbeliever."

I would advise any one who wants to see Mecca to go at the pilgrimage season because it is easier to get there for one thing, and much more interesting for another. I do not think the measures I adopted as regards language, disguise, and so forth can be much improved upon. In any case I strongly recommend the traveller to enter the country in disguise and not wait to assume it till after his arrival at the port. Neglect of this obvious precaution has led to several would-be pilgrims being found out at Jiddah and ignominiously sent back. While in Mecca the traveller must be very careful to avoid the society of pilgrims from the country to which he is supposed to belong, and he should not on any account allow his Mutowif to come to his house ; indeed it is better if possible not to employ the same one twice. The less he has to do with them in any way the better—they are too sharp.

With due observance of these precautions, a passable knowledge of Arabic and Moslem ceremonial, and proper vigilance, the pilgrimage to Mecca may be made in disguise without running any risk worth mentioning.

Medina is much the more dangerous place of the two, and no traveller should adventure himself there who is not very thoroughly at home in his Oriental character. From what I have since heard I am disposed to attribute our escape to a series of happy chances rather than to good management on my own part.

Finally as to the law on the subject. The Ottoman Government claims the right to exclude foreign travellers from the Hedjaz, and to expel them if found there, while disclaiming responsibility for anything that may happen in consequence of their being there. This position is accepted in practice by the other Powers, whose representatives however are not supposed to "give away" any one making the journey in secret of whom they may come to have knowledge. There is nothing illegal in going there—it is merely contrary to regulation. Of course it does to some extent involve defying the "wishes and express injunctions" of the authorities, which as we shall see later is regarded in some quarters as a very terrible crime.

PART II

CHAPTER X

YOUNG TURKEY AND THE YEMEN

The hour was late and the smoking room almost deserted when the conversation about to be reported took place. My companion the Pasha was a tall, heavy man, on whose sunburned and lined countenance a long life in the open air and many hard-fought campaigns in tropical countries had left their traces. He had been a field marshal once, but that was in the days of Abdul Hamid, when, as some one said after the American civil war, "you could not spit out of window without hitting a major-general." It was to this latter rank that the reshuffle which followed hard on the constitution had reduced him. When in uniform the breast of his tunic, broad as it is, can scarce find place for all the decorations he has won; and the scars of several bullet-wounds and a couple of sword-cuts can testify that they are not unearned. He had listened to my rather long recital with polite and I had thought genuine interest.

"Yes," he said, "I heard a lot about it at the time. I'm sorry you did not get away. It would have been a sell for that animal."

"Yes," I replied, "it would indeed; and more, I should have been able probably to accomplish something of real use. As it is time, money, trouble—all wasted."

The Pasha regarded me with some curiosity.

"Do not think," he continued after a pause, "that I blame you. On the contrary: I am a patriot myself, and I admire a man who works for his country. To be a spy requires courage and resource. I admire you, and think that you deserve the highest honours England can award you; but I daresay," he continued with a grin, "you are not doing so badly out of it, eh?"

I tried to assume an expression indicative of my wounded feelings as I replied:

"I fear your Excellency has misunderstood me, or perhaps I have expressed myself badly. I was making or endeavouring to make, if you prefer it, a journey for purely scientific purposes. I wanted, as I have just told you, to explore certain parts of Arabia which are at present unknown, and my expedition had no connection whatever with the British Government or any one else except myself and, in a sort of way, the Geographical Society."

"I see; and what was the Geographical Society going to pay you for it?"

"Part of the expenses, possibly, had I been successful—nothing more."

"My dear boy," said the Pasha, "you can keep all that sort of stuff for Mohammed Ali, and have the great kindness not to consider me a perfect fool. Have I lived more than half a century for nothing? Do you expect me to believe that you risk your life and spend your time in these beastly countries for nothing? You and your Geographical Society! *Fichtre!* Besides," he went on, "I know more than you think. I can show you some correspondence about yourself that may surprise you."

"Indeed," I said, "and what may it be about—this sacred correspondence?"

"About you, and your doings up in Sanaa. We know, for instance, that you had £20,000 to distribute among the rebels."

"Heavens!" I exclaimed, "do you suppose that if I had £20,000 I should be fool enough to give it away to those swine?"

"Not all of it, perhaps," chuckled His Excellency, leaning across the table to dig me in the ribs and taking the opportunity to help himself to four fingers of my whisky; to which, by way of homage to the conventions, he proceeded to add a little water.

This was not what I had meant at all.

"Look here," I said, "I give you my word of honour"—the Pasha smiled—"very well then, if you like, I swear on my hopes for the hereafter, by the right of the Prophet——"

"*Fiche-moi la paix!*" he cried, laughing heartily, "*toi et ton Prophète!*"

"You don't believe in the Prophet?" I asked, disconcerted.

"No, I don't," said the Pasha, "nor do you. *Le vieux farceur!* You tell me all these things and expect me to believe them? You should know better. Of course you will not say so—quite right; but I know that you have been to all these places, Tripoli, Hedjaz, and the rest, to collect information for your War Department—what else? Six of your officers went to the Imam this time: you were in Sanaa and the other five with the besiegers—what?"

"That," I had interjected, "is obviously untrue."

"Why?"

"Because," I riposted, getting home on him for once, "if there had been they would have taken the place within the first week."

"That may be so," responded the General, "but we are not such fools as you take us for. What do I care for the Yemen or the Hedjaz? *Je m'en fous!* Take them all if you like, and give me Paris. But don't tell me you work for nothing. Your War Department——"

"Can go to perdition so far as I am concerned"—I was beginning to get heated. "Do you seriously suppose that if we wanted information about these countries we could not get it in a dozen better and cheaper ways? You may believe it or not, as you like, but our War Department takes so little interest in the whole affair that they won't so much as ask me what happened in Sanaa. Do you really believe that the British Government spends these huge sums of money to interfere in your miserable squabbles with the Imam and the rest of them? Twenty thousand pounds? Why, if the Porte offered to sell the whole province for twenty thousand piastres I don't believe any country in Europe would be fool enough to buy it. And if England did want to help the Arabs against you, do you imagine it would be done in this sort of way? When we want to send spies to a place we don't give official assurances about them. That may have been Abdul Hamid's way of doing things, but it isn't ours. You talk of the new *régime*, of civilization

and progress, yet you can't believe that any one can do anything from disinterested motives. If you or Mohammed Ali or any one else would think over the matter for two minutes you would see the absurdity of your idea."

"I know what I know," replied the General imperturbably: "every one who does anything expects to get something. Your country wants more land, we all know that, and will take ours if it can. Good. All Governments are bad,* and one pack of thieves is no worse than another. Islam or Christianity—what does it matter? Fairy tales—as you know as well as I do. The new *régime*—bah! *la bonne blague!* Abdul Hamid was a rogue and made what he could for himself when he had the chance! Then some other bigger rogues came and took his place. The Prophet was a rogue, the Sultan is a rogue, and so is Mohammed Ali. They all do the best they can for themselves. I am a rogue myself," concluded his Excellency as he again refilled his glass, "and so are you."

Not every Turk is so outspoken as my friend the Pasha, and comparatively few, let us hope, share his views on certain points. Yet of the class to which he belongs such a frame of mind is typical. There are some aspects of English character which are almost inconceivable to them, in the same way that there are some sides of Turkish character which are incomprehensible to ourselves. The words Turk and Turkish are used here in their political rather than their ethnological sense, for what is true of the Turk in this respect is true of other Orientals, the difference being only in degree. When in the course of our dealings with them collectively as a nation, or individually in private affairs, these differences become prominent, friction occurs and bears fruit in wars or "incidents" which in nine cases out of ten are due less to any conflict of interests than merely to the inability of either side to appreciate the other point of view. This fundamental divergence of thought carries the disputants farther and farther apart, and as negotiations proceed the gulf of misunderstanding widens in direct ratio with the amount of discussion that takes place.

* The Pasha is an Albanian.

This occurs not merely from lack of sympathy with the other side of the case, but from failure to understand what that other side is ; and when the quarrel is eventually adjusted both parties are apt to feel equally aggrieved without very clearly understanding what the dispute has been about.

When Great Britain brings pressure to bear on Belgium to put an end to administrative abuses in the Congo, her action may give rise to anger and resentment in Brussels, but her motives for it are not misunderstood. The existence of the abuses may be denied, or they may be declared to be the inevitable consequences of the state of the country, or the character of its inhabitants, or any other arguments may be used ; but the course of the discussion and the reasons for it are as intelligible to the Belgian as they are to the English public.

But when we inform Persia that if she really cannot establish a state of reasonable security on certain trade routes within a given time we shall have to do something in the matter ourselves, we find to our astonishment that an outburst of hostile feeling in Constantinople is the immediate result. "Why?" asks the well-informed man in the street. "What has Persia to do with Turkey? Do not the Persians and Turks hate each other because of their religious differences, and are they not always quarrelling? Besides," he may well continue, "surely every one must prefer good government to anarchy, and safety to insecurity! We have promised to respect the integrity of Persia and have said that our one desire is to see her strong and prosperous. Our intention is to help these people and they ought to like it."

They ought to but they don't. We cannot see why our determination to protect British traders in one country should rouse hostility in another ; we cannot see why our well-meant efforts to effect improvements in the state of Persia or secure the lives of Armenians in Anatolia should rouse anger and hatred not only in the countries concerned, but throughout the East. The state of Egypt as it is now, compared to what it was before the occupation, ought, we think, to be an example sufficiently striking to convert any sceptic as to the beneficent results of British administrative methods.

When we fail to understand these things it is because we persist in considering that, *cæteris paribus*, every question appears to an Oriental in the same light as it does to a European mind. We use in speaking of Eastern matters words and expressions—"patriotism," for instance, and "slavery"—which do not occur in any Eastern tongue. The expressions for them that we find in dictionaries are merely the nearest equivalents in the language for the idea conveyed by the English words. An axiom is defined as the statement of a fact not susceptible of proof but so obvious in itself that it does not need to be proved. Moral as well as physical sciences rest on axioms. The Western school of statecraft rests on the axiom that the primary division of mankind is determined by racial and geographical considerations. The peoples of the earth group themselves into nations which for purposes of government form states. The State in dealing with its neighbours acts as a corporate body and in accordance with the code of morality incumbent on each separate individual belonging to it. Patriotism, that is the allegiance and devotion of the individual to the State, is accounted the highest virtue.

In the Near East however these ideas are not accepted as axiomatic ; quite the reverse. There the inhabitants of the world are classified according to their religious beliefs. The unit is no longer the nation but the "millah." The Oriental, be he Moslem, Christian, or Jew, regards his co-religionists as his compatriots irrespective of racial or territorial considerations. The Ottoman Empire, in the view of an Eastern Christian, is merely an expression meaning those countries in which the Moslem "millah" at the present time dominates and governs the others. To the Moslem Turk, Greeks, Frenchmen, Germans, and Armenians all fall in the same category. They differ, he sees, in many ways, but all are equally Christians and to him equally obnoxious. When Germany comes near war with France, "Good," says the Turk, "*the Christians* are quarrelling among themselves." When Russia invades Persia, "Here," says he, "is another attempt on the part of *the Christians* to injure *Islam*."

Each millah believes that it will eventually prevail

over the others. Hostility among them is regarded as perfectly natural and inevitable.

This seems to us a strange and perverted way of looking at things: the idea of ignoring all racial differences in order to consider mankind as divided up into so many groups held together by nothing but their religious opinions seems to us unreasonable to the point of being ridiculous. Yet throughout the Turkish Empire this theorem is to-day regarded by the mass of the people as something so excessively obvious as to be beyond discussion.

When the spread of education and contact with Europeans had converted a certain body of opinion among the upper classes in Turkey to the Western view, an agitation began which resulted in the establishment of constitutional Turkey. It must not however be imagined that the success of the revolution was due to the sudden appearance of a genuine spirit of nationalism. The doctrine of the "fatherland" as propounded by the Young Turk orator is seldom understood by his audience, and when it is comprehended rarely finds acceptance. It is too revolutionary. The impression produced on most of his listeners was somewhat as follows: Abdul Hamid's government was full of abuses, and it was time for a change. People who had been to Europe said things went much better there, which was chiefly due to things called parliaments. In order to make the Sultan really strong enough to fight the Europeans it was necessary to stop squabbling among the millahs and for all to pull together. Well, this was by no means a bad idea in some ways.

It appealed to many of them on other and more personal grounds. The Jews and Christians of course hailed the idea with enthusiasm, for it put them on a footing of equality with the Moslems. Soldiers and Government servants liked the prospect of regular pay. Some people rather fancied themselves as deputies in the new Parliament.

So the great experiment was tried, and the triumph of Young Turkey was received in Europe, in England especially, with the utmost enthusiasm. Here at last was a solution, all the more acceptable for being so un-

expected, of that very troublesome problem, what to do with Turkey in Europe. No more talk of bag and baggage—that belonged to the bad old days now happily gone by. There might be some difficulty at first in reconstructing the colossal fabric of the Turkish Empire on these very novel lines, but Europe must be patient ; it would be surmounted. None of the diseases afflicting the body politic could long survive the application of that panaceafor all evils, a real Constitutional Parliament. So all the cage doors were thrown open and Turkey entered on the New Régime. Abdul Hamid, it will be observed, did not fail to appreciate the true significance of what was happening. He placed his dagger on the joint of the constitutional armour with the practised skill of an old hand. When he judged that enough nonsense had been talked about liberty, he set to work to inflame the religious sentiment of the Moslems. The attack was premature and failed : it shook but did not shatter the constitution. Abdul Hamid was in too much of a hurry for once : of course he is getting old.

The new rulers, it must be confessed, did their best to justify the good opinion of their friends. They overcame difficulties by simply ignoring their existence. We have not yet seen our way to creating an Imperial Parliament, even in that modified form which would embrace the great English-speaking colonies to the exclusion of our subject races. No one has so far proposed to bring Hindus and Zulus to St. Stephens. Yet this is what the amateur statesmen of Young Turkey were called upon to bring into being—an assembly representative of a great number of different races and creeds having nothing more in common than the allegiance they had been forced to profess to the power, which by calling them together, was *ipso facto* admitting its inability to rule any longer. They attacked this problem ; and if they did not succeed in producing an Imperial Parliament, at any rate they produced something that looked like one.

The offspring of this first flirtation of Islam with democracy is not a healthy child, but it is still alive, and, stranger still, the Ottoman Empire has survived the shock of parturition. Constitutional Turkey may outgrow its congenital weaknesses and become in time an

efficient instrument for the good government of the Near East; it deserves at any rate to be given every chance.

Things have not been going well lately. Old abuses that it was thought had been swept away have been showing a tendency to reappear in an aggravated form, and people in Turkey are beginning to ask themselves what they have actually gained, while the philanthropists of the West are getting a little impatient.

The warning that the Balkan Committee, more in sorrow than in anger, has felt compelled to issue to the Young Turks that if they do not mend their ways they run a grave risk of forfeiting the respect and esteem of the English people, has, it must be confessed, coming from such a quarter only two years after the commencement of the New Era, a rather ominous sound. The spirited reply of the prominent Turkish politician who compared their conduct favourably in some respects with that of Oliver Cromwell will, if it serves no other good purpose, at least help to divert the leisure hours of Abdul Hamid.

The failure of the experiment is to be anticipated in my own opinion for the reasons given above. The movement is superficial, not profound. Its prospects at the outset were certainly not improved by the extravagant and foolish adulations of the European press.

The fact that nationalist propaganda find very limited success in other Eastern countries is due to the same causes: namely, that to be effective it is necessary, not merely to instil a new or revive an old idea, but to found and build up an entirely new school of thought.

On the way to Mecca I overheard the following conversation between Abdul Wahid and our camel-driver.

"Yes," the latter was saying, "but something else has come to the country this year besides the iron road; something they call the Huriyah."

Here, I thought, was a chance for Abdul Wahid, who loves getting "on the stump," and was once part editor of some revolutionary journal run, needless to say, from Paris. His exposition was bound to be a little verbose. What word has so sweet a sound as Freedom, what fruits are so rare and refreshing as those of the tree of liberty? (The reader will forgive the slight confusion

here apparent. My recollection is imperfect, and these orators all go on in much the same way.)

"And so," perorated Abdul Wahid, "oppression and tyranny are done with; henceforward, the strong and the weak, the rich and the poor, the Moslem and the Jew, are equal and alike in the sight of the law; and all must work together for the glory and prosperity of the common Fatherland" (Watn).

"Their what?" asked the Bedoui.

"The Watn," said Abdul Wahid: "the state we both belong to."

"I come from Taif," said the camel-man, after trudging on in silence for some little time.

"And I from Haleb," said Abdul Wahid: "that makes no difference; we are both Osmanlis. Whose are these soldiers we see here?"

"They are the Khaleefah's soldiers."

"Yes, but what is their Watn?"

"Some are Arabs and some are Turks and some Arnaweet."

"Yes, no doubt," exclaimed Abdul Wahid, in a position to appreciate the beauty of Wordsworth's "We are seven"; "but what is the difference between you and so-and-so?"

"I am a Moslem and he is a Christian."

"You are an Osmanli and he is a German. Religion makes no difference now."

"Do you mean," said the Arab suddenly, eyeing Abdul Wahid with some suspicion, "that the Commander of the Faithful thinks a Christian as good as a Moslem?"

"Of course not. God forgive us! (the thought)."

"Then I do not yet quite understand," said the camel-man. And Abdul Wahid decided that perhaps, after all, it was better, and safer, to leave him in the dark.

. . . . .

When a traveller from a foreign country lands at a Turkish port, he is asked to produce his passport. He does so; and if of an observant turn of mind, may note with surprise that the officer scribbles something on it and hands it back to him without attempting to read it. The reason is, that he can't read it, and the document would mean nothing to him if he could. If the traveller

says he is a tourist, looks like one, and behaves like one, does the things that tourists ought to do, and has dealings with Messrs. T. Cook & Son, he may stay long and travel far in Turkey without becoming aware of anything unusual. If, on the contrary, he shows a knowledge of the language, does not want to buy "antika" or see ruins, and manifests a preference for the society of the natives over that of his brother tourists, then he will very soon realize that he is no longer in Europe. People, he will find, who were very friendly at first, are no longer at home when he calls; if he meets them in the street, they are full of politeness, but always in a hurry. Others come forward, however, who are only too anxious to take their place. These are most assiduous in their attentions. They will hardly let the traveller out of their sight. They evince a somewhat curious readiness to discuss any subject of interest whatsoever—even politics. It generally turns out that this latter set of acquaintances hold Radical, not to say revolutionary views, and have particularly good reasons for disliking the present Vali or Mutassarif, or whoever it may be.

The traveller soon finds that he is being watched. Tradesmen no longer want his custom, and can hardly be persuaded to send to his house.

If he gets angry and goes to the governor to complain, nothing can exceed the politeness of that official. He can hardly believe that the police can have been so stupid as to suspect his visitor, who must, he thinks, be the victim of a mild hallucination. But he will inquire.

It may end in one of several ways. The foreigner may live down suspicion, and by convincing the authorities that he is only a scientist or artist or some other kind of harmless madman, may secure freedom from molestation; he may be entrapped into saying or doing something that gives them an excuse for complaining of him; or he may get sick of it and go home of his own accord. Otherwise he may eat something that disagrees with him.

This is the common but not, of course, the universal experience of travellers who, for business or pleasure, do things in Turkey that lie outside the ordinary scope of "tourism." Roughly speaking, the more out-of-the-way the place in which they elect to do these things, the

greater the annoyance they are likely to suffer in consequence. In cases where the traveller carries unexceptionable credentials and introductions to those in high places, what has been said above may be largely discounted, but is still applicable.

In the Turkish Empire all foreigners not obviously "tourists" are objects for suspicion, some nationalities more so than others, depending on the political situation for the time being. Nor is it only foreigners who suffer from the evil effects of this unwholesome atmosphere. The Vali suspects that the Mutassarif wants his post and employs spies to watch his proceedings; the Mutassarif in turn thinks it as well to find out as much as possible about the Vali's private life, and acts accordingly. Both are carefully watched by the central authorities. There are not only spies in Turkey, but spies on spies, whole systems and organizations of them, as is sufficiently well known. Many suppose that the practice of political and domestic espionage ceased with the advent of the constitution. This idea is mistaken; it was not and cannot be put a stop to, because it is merely a symptom of a deep-seated disease in the Turkish character—mistrust.

Nothing, to the Turk, is what it seems to be; the obvious he neglects for the complicated explanation; the straight path for the crooked. Frankness is guile and hypocrisy combined; or merely evidence of an attempt to bluff. It is better to lie at first, he thinks, than speak the truth, even though there be nothing to conceal.

These traits, and the evils arising from them, are the outcome, no doubt, of centuries of misgovernment, and would tend to disappear under an improved *régime*. This may be so, but they have not disappeared yet; and as defects in the body politic they are as glaring at the present day as ever they were under Abdul Hamid.

It is a curious thing that, in spite of all these precautions, the elaborate passport system, the secret police, the spies, and all the rest, in no country is it easier to travel secretly, or to hatch plots if so disposed, than in Turkey. The very excess of fear and multiplication of safeguards defeat their own object and actually facilitate the work of the conspirator. The whole of the expensive organization designed to protect the existing order of

things, controlled as it is by those interested in that continuance, is generally employed in watching or molesting perfectly harmless individuals while the real plot matures unsuspected.

Men's actions, as we all know, are governed less by the written law than by a code of morality based on principles not easy to explain, for it considers some things allowable that the law condemns, while forbidding others that the law allows. Smuggling, for instance, most of us regard as a permissible crime, if I may be allowed the paradoxical expression. We sympathize with our friends when they are caught committing it ; and we are not the least ashamed when we get caught doing so ourselves.

The Turks regard the giving and taking of bribes in this way. Except in the way that the mere acceptance of a bribe usually involves a pledge of secrecy, the Turk is not in the least concerned to conceal the fact that he has taken one. The same applies to other forms of corruption, " commissions " on appointments, misappropriation of funds designed for public works, and so on, which exist, of course, in Western countries also, but with this essential difference. The European is ashamed of them, and the Turk is not.

Some may consider, and perhaps rightly, that in the matter of bribery the principal obloquy should fall on the person who offers the bribe rather than on him who takes it. Any one who feels inclined to blame those who, having real business in Turkey, facilitate it in this manner, may do so ; but let him first travel through Europe without giving tips.

A certain improvement has taken place recently. Since the constitution has been established corruption, though it has continued to exist, has been far less flagrant than formerly. Many high-minded Turks have forsworn the practice ; increased salaries, regularly paid, have made it possible for them to do so without hardship. In Abdul Hamid's day it often happened that the governor of a province was expected to pay his own salary by selling the subordinate offices.

The value of experiences to one's self and their interest to others depends on a proper understanding of first

causes. It is in this belief at any rate that I have ventured to inflict on the reader the foregoing reflections, which may appear to him out of place. My best excuse for making them is to be found among the newspaper files of July 1908 and subsequently.

I will conclude with a few words regarding the present position of England in the eyes of the Turks. It would be wrong to conclude from the distracted state of the Ottoman Empire at this moment that it is on the point of dissolution, or that Turkish friendship is not worth having. Influence at Constantinople means certain solid material advantages for the country that wields it. For certain special reasons, among them our position in Egypt and the fact that so large a proportion of the Moslems in the world are British subjects, a good understanding between ourselves and the Turks is very desirable.

Towards the end of the year 1908 circumstances had conspired to render British influence predominant in a manner never before known. Germany, the friend and supporter of Abdul Hamid, had got her money on the wrong horse. Austria was regarded as a potential enemy. Italy was unpopular, and most Turks detest Russia and the Russians. England and France together held the field, but it was for British (rather than French) ideals and institutions that preference was shown. If, neglecting all prospects of deriving material advantage from the situation, we had considered solely the welfare of the Turks themselves, and those under their rule, we ought not to have allowed this unique opportunity for doing good to slip away from us. The fact that it has been allowed to slip, and that British influence at Constantinople has been supplanted in the paramount position by that of another Power, is generally attributed to able diplomacy on the one side and ineptitude on the other. Be that as it may, other causes also have operated in bringing about this unfortunate result, causes for which no individuals can fairly be held responsible.

The "navy scare" of 1909 began it. Those who write articles for the newspapers to prove that our navy is inadequate and undermanned; that it is badly administered and unprepared for war; and that, unless

quite extraordinary exertions are made, it will shortly be less than a match for that of a certain neighbouring Power, are no doubt actuated by the highest possible motives. The same must be said of those who in Parliament and public places call the nation's attention to these supposed defects. No one is to blame, but the fact remains, and it is worth remembering, that these articles and speeches appear in the vernacular Eastern press and lose nothing in the process of translation. When one half of the country is vehemently protesting that the other half has endangered the safety of the whole, is the Oriental to be blamed for believing that that safety is really imperilled ? I write "the Oriental" rather than "the foreigner" because, European countries having free presses of their own, their publics can estimate better the right value that is to be attached to what is said in the course of political discussion. To cut it short, we have allowed the Turks to think that we are afraid of Germany, and we are in the fair way to lead them to think that we are afraid of Turkey. The Turks are a fighting race. They can sympathize with the mailed fist, even when it hits them, much more easily than they can appreciate talk of universal arbitration or the limitation of armaments.

A certain atmosphere of pessimism, a sort of political hypochondria, which originated in the South African war has oppressed the country ever since that event. It finds expression variously : in endless whining in the press about the state of the navy and the army, the fall in Consols, the declining birthrate, the weather, the lack of good plays nowadays, and anything else that happens to crop up ; in an absence of national confidence and self-restraint in time of danger, the outbreaks of hysterical excitement that prompt the suffragist raids, weakening of respect for the law, industrial strife, and many other ways that will occur to the reader.

We Englishmen attach no undue importance to all this. We observe it and are distressed accordingly : but our appetites and digestions continue their functions unimpaired by the most gloomy forebodings of the New Year leader-writer. The Turk, however, who reads these things wonders simply why we don't begin learning German on the spot.

Abdul Hamid and his satellites had a most wholesome awe of and respect for the majesty of what is, as the late Lord Salisbury once told him, the greatest power the world has ever known. However fierce the hatred with which our policy inspired him, however much he may have disliked individuals, wherever British interests or property were concerned "hands off" was the order of his day. This respect, and the fear that inspired it, are by no means extinct: but they are diminishing.

Englishmen as a rule are little disposed to criticize the conduct of foreign affairs except in their larger issues. The subject is recognized as being too highly specialized for unskilled comment, and they are content to leave it to those charged therewith, confident that whatever else may happen the prestige and dignity of the nation and the status of British citizenship will not be allowed to suffer.

Our relations with Turkey during the past few years have been remarkably free from "incidents" disturbing to their harmony. This satisfactory state of things may be due to a more skilful conduct of affairs than heretofore, to our assumption of a less provocative attitude, to the regeneration of the Turkish character, or simply to the fact that nothing has occurred. Another explanation is conceivable. It takes, as we know, two to make a quarrel. When a person conceives himself aggrieved he may either fight, or induce his adversary to apologize, or pocket the insult and walk away.

In my own opinion England has been adopting the last attitude for some time past. Whether or not the incidents, trivial in themselves, about to be related have any bearing on the subject the reader will decide for himself.

. . . . .

Reference was made in an earlier chapter to the mountainous country in the south-west corner of the Arabian peninsula which, for the sake of perspicuity, we agreed to call the Yemen. This word means right as opposed to left, and in its broadest sense geographically might be taken to include all that country to the right of an observer at Jiddah facing the Kibla (*i.e.* in the direction of Mecca), which is now comprised by the Ottoman

Sanjaks of Asir and Yemen, and the British protectorate of Aden.

These highlands, we noticed, are peopled by a race of agriculturists settled in towns and villages, which, owing partly to this fact and partly to the very considerable foreign element introduced at various times, differs much from the true Arabian type.

The history of these regions goes back to the highest antiquity. That they were the seat of a civilization as old as or older than that of Egypt is beyond the possibility of doubt. The earliest written inscriptions of which we have knowledge date from about 4000 B.C. They relate to the foundation of the Minnæan dynasty, which begins the historical period. The Minnæan was succeeded by the Sabæan kingdom, which reached the height of its power and prosperity in the time of Solomon. The visit of the "Queen of Sheba" to that monarch is described in the Koran as well as in the Old Testament. Arab and Hebrew traditions alike bear witness to the wealth and grandeur of the Sabæan monarchs, and that these are no fabulous tales is proved by the dimensions of the great dam of Marib, one hundred and twenty feet high and two miles in length, the ruins of which still exist and have been seen by at least three European travellers in modern times.

The Roman expedition to Arabia led by Ælius Gallius has already been mentioned. It seems to have reached Marib, and must have seen the dam, though the fact is not specifically mentioned in the accounts we have of it.

The bursting of this dam about A.D. 120 caused the centre of south-west Arabian civilization to shift from Marib to Sanaa. The decadent Sabæans of that day were probably unable to reconstruct it, and so were compelled to move to a country that did not depend on irrigation works. At the same time, from what we know of Marib, it seems almost incredible that the dam could ever have been very full; and its existence, like that of the Aden tanks, goes to prove that the climate of South Arabia must have altered very greatly in historical times.

Judaism was introduced into South-west Arabia about the beginning of the Christian Era. Christianity itself soon followed, and spread rapidly in spite of persecution.

In revenge for cruelties practised on the Yemen Christians the King of Abyssinia was induced to invade the country. Sanaa was taken, and Christianity established as the State religion at the beginning of the sixth century. Thus was overthrown the Himyaritic dynasty and cult, which had succeeded the Sabæan.

It was during their occupation of the Yemen that the Abyssinians invaded the Hedjaz with the object of seizing Mecca. They were defeated and nearly annihilated at the battle of "The Elephant." This event has a special interest for us, far beyond what its intrinsic importance would merit, for the following reason. The 105th chapter of the Koran runs as follows: "Seest thou not how thy Lord served the masters of the elephant? Did He not cause their cunning to be their own loss, and sent He not at them magical birds to pelt them with stones of baked clay and made them even as chewed grass?" The allusion of course is to this battle, which was the first and probably the only occasion when elephants have been brought into Arabia. What is remarkable about it is that the battle was fought in the year of Mohammed's birth, so that, when the above chapter was revealed to him at Mecca, there must have been many people living there who not only were alive at the time the battle was fought, but had actually taken part in the conflict. Yet, in spite of the bitter hostility Mohammed's preaching aroused in Mecca, no one seems to have challenged the statement that the destruction of the Abyssinian army was brought about by these supernatural means. We are thus forced to conclude, either that the miracle did actually take place, or, in the alternative, that the Prophet and his followers were in the habit of admitting a figurative interpretation of certain passages in the Koran. The acceptance of this latter conclusion would involve prodigious consequences, and it is to-day utterly repudiated by Moslem doctors.

The Persian conquest of the Yemen which took place towards the end of the sixth century introduced yet another civilization, another religious cult, and a further admixture of blood. Thus, at the time of the Hegrah, Zoroastrianism, Christianity, and Judaism, in order of

numerical importance, were the religions of a people who were considerably more advanced in all ways than the other inhabitants of the peninsula.

In the tenth year of the Hegrah Ali was sent to the Yemen, charged with a special mission to convert its rulers and people to Islam, and in this he succeeded. Their character, and the number of different religious ideas then prevailing throughout the country, rendered them particularly easy to influence and bring over to any new creed or system that seemed likely to be an improvement on what had gone before. Scarcely had news of Mohammed's success penetrated to the Yemen, when a rival prophet, famous in Moslem history as "Museilima the liar," appeared on the scene. For a time his success almost rivalled that of Mohammed, whom he survived by several years, to be finally crushed in the reign of Abu Bakar by the Moslem forces under Khalid. Museilima, though the most celebrated, was by no means the only imitator of Mohammed—even in the Yemen.

During the period of Islamic expansion and the great days of the Eastern caliphate the Yemen remained a province governed by officials responsible to the central authority, and shared in the prosperity and progress associated with that brilliant epoch. With the fall of the Benee Abbas and the disintegration of the Arabian Empire, the Yemen became an independent state, and though arts and letters continued to flourish for a time, the people did not long escape the rapid decadence that set in among the Arabs and spread, as if in accordance with some physical law, with a rapidity equal to that of the original uplifting impulse. The origin of the Zaidie sect dates from about this period. Among the many minor principalities into which the country became split up, this party, half political, half sectarian in its nature, gradually became predominant. Allusion has already been made to the differences between the Sunna and Sheia. The Zaidies belong to the latter division, and are distinguished from other Sheia sects by the fact that they regard a certain Zaid ibn Ali as one of the twelve Imams. This word "Imam" gives rise to much pardonable confusion, for it means several different

things all in the same connection. The twelve Imams of Islam are Ali and certain other persons celebrated in Moslem history, the last being "The Mahdi," or Moslem Messiah, who has not yet appeared. The word however is also applied variously to a temporal ruler descended from the Prophet, to a sort of Moslem priest, and to the leader at prayers.

Yahyah, the founder of the Zaidie sect, proclaimed himself Imam, that is to say ruler of all Moslems, by virtue of his descent from the Prophet. The Sheia do not use the title "Commander of the Faithful" to denote the supreme Moslem authority, because they consider it the prerogative of Ali ibn Abee Talib and no one else.

The Zaidie theocracy under the dynasty founded by Yahyah continued to gain adherents till it assumed the character of an independent state, with Sanaa the seat of government. The first European to visit the Imam in his capital was the Danish traveller Niebuhr, who led an expedition to the Yemen in A.D. 1761. He found the country rich and prosperous, under a government apparently stable and well organized. The Turks who had established control there in the sixteenth century had been expelled, and the former state of complete independence had been regained.

Although the religious tenets of the Zaidie sectaries were highly obnoxious to the Wahabi reformers, the Yemen, owing to its geographical situation and the natural barriers which protected it from attack on the landward side, suffered comparatively little from their aggressions. The war undertaken by Mohammed Ali, the Sultan's viceroy in Egypt, to recover the Hedjaz and break the Wahabi power, was the cause of a quarrel between him and the "Imam of Sanaa," as the Zaidie potentate had come to be called, that led to the occupation by the former of several of the South Arabian ports, and part of the Tehama, or coast belt.

In 1844 the Imam was again forced to acknowledge Turkish suzerainty, but it remained little more than nominal for another thirty years. In 1872 Mukhtar Pasha invaded the Yemen highlands and captured Sanaa. The Imam, though retained as a figure head, was pensioned off by the Turks and deprived of all real power. Like

his immediate predecessors he was a weak degenerate, and the country under his rule had fallen into a state of misgovernment little removed from anarchy.

The first results of the Turkish occupation were therefore beneficial, and it was generally welcomed for that reason. Not many years elapsed however before Turkish methods in their turn began to cause discontent. The Arabs dislike being treated as a "subject race": they dislike paying taxes, and still more do they dislike the Turkish way of collecting them: they dislike the Turk for his manners, his laws, his religion, his clothes, and his personal appearance: in fact they dislike pretty well everything connected with him.

In these circumstances, as not infrequently happens, past abuses were forgotten in the presence of actual annoyances. The advantages of peace, security, and a decent administration (so far as it went) ceased to be appreciated; and men began to attribute every evil, and there were many, to the foreign occupation, and to look back with regret to the days of their country's independence. The smouldering fire of sectarian fanaticism, fanned by the prevailing discontent, began to smoke ominously. The feeling spread that the Zaidies should submit no longer to the domination of a race whose religious doctrines they regarded as heretical, and this feeling culminated in a movement to restore to the Imam the throne that he had been wrongfully deprived of by the Osmanli.

The rebellion that broke out in 1891 attained at first a large measure of success. Sanaa was closely besieged for several months, and only relieved after severe fighting. Several less important Turkish garrisons had to capitulate. An army sent from Europe under Ahmad Feizi Pasha succeeded in restoring tranquillity after an arduous and costly campaign.

Peace, however, did not last long. Sporadic outbreaks continued to occur, and in 1905 a general revolt was once more in progress. On this occasion the rebels captured Sanaa by starving the garrison into submission. More than seventy pieces of artillery, together with a great quantity of small arms, ammunition, and other warlike equipment, fell into their hands.

Once more was it necessary to send an army from Europe to vindicate Ottoman sovereignty, and once more did success reward the valour and determination of the Turkish troops. The revolt was suppressed, Sanaa was recaptured, and all the old positions reoccupied, but only at a cost in blood and money that it seems surprising that Turkey should have thought it worth while to incur. The operations, moreover, were indecisive in one way; the Imam and his followers utterly declined to surrender any of the weapons and stores they had captured, and it was only by the Turks giving way on this point that a qualified peace was eventually patched up.

This last peace was in reality little more than a truce, and would scarcely have proved as enduring as it actually did but for the events in European Turkey in the years 1908–9. The genuine enthusiasm for the new constitution, and the high hopes it at first inspired, spread to the Arabs themselves; though the cause, the probable effects, and the very nature of the movement were imperfectly understood on all sides. The feverish desire of the Turkish statesmen to secure peace at home and abroad, for a time at any rate, led them to promise the Zaidies what practically amounted to "home rule." They asked from them time to formulate a scheme which should be satisfactory to both sides, and they were granted it. In the meanwhile, they gave up all attempts to collect revenue from the Arabs. Even the "octroi" method of taxation was abandoned. Such was the state of affairs in 1910.

For practical purposes we may consider the Zaidie country to be the mountainous part of what appears on the map as "the Yemen." This definition is not strictly accurate, for the Ottoman pashalik contains many Sunna tribes, in the south especially. The eastern boundary is the desert, where the settled population is replaced by the nomad Bedou. The western frontier is the edge of cultivation on the seaward slopes; what the northern frontier may be is an unsolved problem. The tribes of Asir are for the most part Shafei, but where the one ends and the other begins no one knows: at any rate, the writer does not.

The Yemen has not the exclusive character of the

Hedjaz. It is not considered holy ground, nor does any special sanctity attach itself to Sanaa, the capital. In the days of the Imam, travellers and merchants were free, in theory, to come and go as they pleased, irrespective of their race or creed. In practice, however, very few cared to do so, the hostility of the population and the dangerous condition of the roads being sufficient to deter them. The authority of the Imam was quite inadequate to protect European travellers off the main routes, even had he chosen to exert it.

Prior to the second Turkish occupation, in 1872, comparatively few Europeans had seen Sanaa, and little had been accomplished in the way of scientific research. Niebuhr, it is true, had done much to clear up an ignorance regarding this country which was before his day almost complete ; but much more remained and still remains to be accomplished.

It is unnecessary to enumerate the travellers to the Yemen since the Turks established themselves there. Though they have been few in number, their researches have sufficed to give us a good general idea of the structural geography and other physical characteristics of the Southern Yemen, better, in fact, than we possess of any other part of the Arabian peninsula.

Of the highland country lying to the north of the Hodeidah-Sanaa road, and of Asir, we know next to nothing.

The travellers who have accomplished most in this part of the world have been drawn thither less by curiosity regarding its geography than by the hope of prosecuting other researches. From what has been said concerning the ancient history of these regions, it will have been gathered that they possess an archæological interest second to no other part of the world. The whole country is rich in relics of the Sabæan and Himyaritic civilizations, and these are said to be still more numerous in the unexplored north than in those parts of which we have actual knowledge.

Marib, the ancient capital, is naturally the spot where the antiquarian explorer most desires to pursue his investigations. Three travellers have reached it in modern times : Arnaud in 1843, Halevy in 1869, and Glaser in

1889. Most of our knowledge of Sabæan history has been derived from the work of the last named in copying and deciphering the inscriptions he found there.

Yet it is not to be supposed that these explorers saw one hundredth part of what there is to be discovered. For one thing little or nothing in the way of excavation was attempted, and in the Arabian desert drift-sand may quite alter the whole configuration of the country in a very short space of time. Much is probably covered by the sand, and much more lies in the adjacent country to the West and South-west, on what must have been the main route to Hadramout, which country itself may well contain archæological treasures of the existence of which we have at present no idea.

All the travellers that reached Marib journeyed in disguise, complete or partial. Arnaud passed himself off as a Magribi Arab, Halevy as a learned Rabbi on a visit to the Jewish colony in Negran, and Glaser, though he did not conceal his nationality, qualified himself for the enterprise by residing in Sanaa for several years and by professing Islam. By liberal gifts, and entertaining the sheikhs of the Bedou tribes when they came to Sanaa, he managed to establish good relations with them, and was allowed ultimately to journey to Marib and spend some time there unmolested. His expedition was made without the sanction of the Turkish authorities, but they did not offer much active opposition to it.

Unlike most other travellers to these regions, I did not go to the Yemen for the purpose, primarily, of archæological research, for which undertaking I do not possess the necessary knowledge. My idea was to penetrate if possible into Southern Negd by way of the Wadi Douasir, an enterprise that has much to recommend it. Whoever succeeds in doing this will have accomplished, not merely an adventurous feat, but a work of great scientific value. It demands no special qualifications beyond a knowledge of the Arabic language and the elementary surveying required of all explorers. Moreover, though highly perilous, there is nothing about it that savours of the impossible, as might fairly be said of geographical undertakings sometimes proposed, among them the one to cross the great desert of Arabia in a motor-car ?

I decided to adopt somewhat the same plan as did Glaser: that is to say, to live for some time in Sanaa before attempting to go farther. If really useful work was to be done, it would be necessary to carry and use certain instruments, and as this is incompatible with any Eastern character, I decided not to attempt any disguise on this occasion. Sanaa suggested itself as an advanced base for several reasons. Being a large city, little known, and in a cool and healthy situation, it would be more pleasant and profitable to spend several months there than at such places as Makalla or Muscat, for example. If it should become expedient to abandon the idea of going up to Riadh, several other alternative expeditions might be undertaken from Sanaa, which ought to prove almost equally fruitful of results scientifically valuable. A journey to Marib and thence down the Hadramout valley would take me through much unknown country; and, further, I had discovered that a mahmal journeys every year from Sanaa to Mecca, following a route that traverses the unexplored Northern Yemen and part of Asir. It was with a view to accompanying this, failing anything better, that I decided to use the title of "Hagi,"* which I had acquired by having made the pilgrimage, with, of course, my Arabic name; but this time not concealing the fact that I was an Englishman by birth. Whichever way I might go on from Sanaa it would certainly be in a Moslem character, and, indeed, the only objection that I could see to this course was the inevitable trouble about passports at the start. I could not use the Turkish passport I had procured at Marseilles because, for one thing, it stated that I was a Zanzibari, and for another it was obsolete. I decided, therefore, to use my English passport, and trust to luck that whoever examined it would be unable to read English, and would endeavour to conceal the fact. At the worst I could always explain that I had become converted since I had taken it out, and had declined to pay the exorbitant sum of five shillings demanded for a new one—a reason

* The full title of a Moslem who has performed the pilgrimage rites at Mecca on the proper days and has also visited Medina is "Hági-yul-haramain-isshareefain" (= pilgrim to the two sanctuaries). The word Hagi is prefixed to the name of the pilgrim from that time forward.

that I felt sure would appear good and sufficient to any Turkish official. The question of casuistry involved had not, and has not, the slightest interest for me.

In conformity with the advice of the Prophet, who said, "first the friend, then the road," I approached our old acquaintance Abdul Wahid with a view to inducing him to come with me. For long he declined to listen, and even went so far as to accuse me of having been the cause of his hair turning prematurely grey—a perfectly natural process, which had begun while we were in Mecca. I was able, however, to adduce some powerful arguments, and the arrangement eventually concluded was satisfactory to both parties. Abdul Wahid was to travel out with me to Sanaa, and stay there one month, after which he was free to return to England or not as he liked.

I was anxious to have him with me—at the outset, at any rate. For one thing, he is a Sheie, and comes of a well-known family. As such he would be sure of a welcome from the fanatical Zaidie citizens of Sanaa. He has a long tongue, a talent for introducing himself and for making friends with all and sundry, and is beside a most fluent liar. Since our last expedition these great qualities had been running to waste, for I had failed to induce him to adopt British nationality and stand for Parliament.

This matter settled, we turned our attention to equipment. So important is this that I make no apology for dealing with it at some length, for though this particular expedition was a failure, I have made others, both openly and in disguise, and have further obtained the advice of people whose views on the subject are entitled to more respect than my own. Expeditions, like wars, depend for their success on careful preparation beforehand, on taking the right things and on employing the right persons, rather than on valour or skill, too often displayed in an emergency which should never have arisen.

Firstly, as to scientific outfit: I took a three-inch sextant and a "black plate" artificial horizon—in my opinion, it is useless to attempt to carry a larger instrument into Arabia; one boiling-point thermometer without the apparatus for boiling it—which can always be improvised; one sling-thermometer; one combined

night-marching and prismatic compass — "Service pattern"; a cavalry sketching board; one aneroid barometer, reading to ten thousand feet; a small case of drawing instruments; two pairs of field-glasses; a small lantern burning paraffin oil, and an electric lantern; a kodak camera with ten dozen films; a half-chronometer watch, and two others. Among the books I took were the two volumes of "Hints to Travellers" * and the parts of the "Nautical Almanac" necessary for the observations I hoped to take,† for the current and next three years, cut out and bound together. A good supply of stationery was not forgotten. For weapons I had two revolvers, one a ·450 Webley Mark IV. Service model, the other a ·38 S. and W. I do not recommend automatic pistols for Arabia, and may remark that the traveller will be well advised to take a few spare pistols, if possible. They are useful to arm one's servants on occasion, and are always acceptable as presents, for which latter purpose spare watches and field-glasses may be taken. We made no special arrangements as regards clothes, nor need any be made, since the traveller will perforce adopt the local costume, whatever it may happen to be. Having some slight knowledge of medicine, I proposed to pass as a doctor, and therefore took a rather more complete medical and surgical outfit than most travellers would burden themselves with. Among other things I took was a shirt of chain mail—which next time will be left at home. A fair-sized tin box sufficed to contain the whole of my equipment, clothes included. I do not think the apparatus could be further reduced except at the risk of sacrificing the chance of bringing back useful results. In the event of it proving impossible in practice to carry or use the instruments, they can always be abandoned. They do not cost very much, and it is well worth while taking them from Europe, in case it should be possible to use them.

* Compiled by the Royal Geographical Society and an essential part of the modern traveller's equipment.

† That is to say, latitude, time, and Azimuth. Only about a quarter of the book is required. The "mean places of fixed stars" should be taken for the middle year. The binding should be of leather, very strong and quite plain, or with a verse from the Koran engraved thereon, which, if expense is no object, is to be recommended.

CHAPTER XI

HODEIDAH

Towards the end of October 1910 Abdul Wahid and I embarked at Suez in a ship called the "Missieh," belonging to the Khedivial Mail Company, and plying between the Red Sea ports—where they are not very particular. We were bound for Hodeidah via Jiddah, Suakim, and Massowa. It being near the time of the pilgrimage, the ship was full up as far as Jiddah. The first-class passengers were for the most part Egyptian pilgrims who landed at Jiddah; those who remained were nearly all bound for the Yemen, and I observed them narrowly in case there might be any one with whom it would be profitable to make friends. There was a smart-looking Turkish officer who occupied, together with his two wives, one of the large cabins forward; but he took his meals there and seldom appeared on deck. Then there was the director of the Hodeidah customs, a piratical-looking person with a full beard; I was amused by the very ostentatious way in which he refused the *vin ordinaire* supplied by the company, and the number of empty brandy bottles that I saw the steward remove from his cabin. These, with a Roumanian on his way to Hodeidah to take up some appointment in the audit department, whose neglect of antiseptic precautions in shaving and consequent affliction with "barber's itch" made him an unsightly object, an Austrian count travelling to Zanzibar with a companion somewhat younger than himself, Abdul Wahid, and myself, composed the passenger list. The count, so the Captain told me, was quite a notability at Vienna, and it was to the presence of this aristocratic personage that we were indebted for the unusually liberal bill of fare, which

had at first astonished me. Having travelled in the Red Sea before, I knew that the commissariat is leased on contract to the chief steward, usually a Greek, and as sheep's brains are the cheapest kind of food obtainable at Red Sea ports, it is on sheep's brains that the passengers are expected to subsist. On this occasion, however, the chief steward had been told to "spread himself," and we all appreciated the benefit of travelling thus, in the shadow of the purple.

It took us eight days to reach Hodeidah. The "Missieh" is not an ocean greyhound, and even in favourable conditions, with a following wind and a smooth sea, about six knots is the most that can be expected of her. In unfavourable conditions she may stop altogether or make stern way. The director of the quarantine settlement at Kamaran told me that he had once started from that island for Suez in one of these ships—I forget if it was this one or another. The weather was very bad, and the director was a very bad sailor. For three days and nights he lay in his bunk suffering the tortures that happily only bad sailors know in this world. On the fourth day the weather moderated a little, and, more dead than alive, at last he reached the deck. Land was in sight on the starboard quarter. "Thank God!" said the director. "What land is that, Captain?" "Kamaran," replied the captain, quite unmoved.

The captain of the "Missieh" was an Englishman, and the time passed pleasantly enough for me in swapping yarns with him, reading, or playing piquet with the Greek doctor. The count and his young friend spent their time at écarté and some other game that I was unable to identify. There were occasional *fracas*, as for instance when one of the passengers wanted to take the ship into a port when the Captain thought it better to stay outside, and when an attempt on the part of a drunken Turkish officer, travelling second class, to instal himself in my deck chair, led to an unseemly scuffle on the quarter deck.

We anchored one morning before sunrise off the town of Hodeidah, some five miles from the shore. It is sufficiently picturesque seen thus at dawn, this group of whitewashed houses and rickety minarets on the desolate surf-beaten

shore, with the dark mass of the Yemen mountains just discernible in the background. I was destined to have several opportunities for admiring it.

We decided, unwisely as it turned out, to let all the other passengers land first. By so doing we nearly got carried on to Aden, for the "Sambook" * that took them ashore, thinking there were no more on board, did not return.

We got a boat eventually, and reached the shore about midday. On landing we were accosted by a dissipated looking official in a dirty uniform who inquired our names and nationalities. The Custom House formalities did not trouble us much, for Abdul Wahid and I had had some practice in dealing with them. Our boxes were not opened, and if any money changed hands it did not go to swell the Ottoman revenues.

The harbour of Hodeidah, which consists of a sea wall enclosing about a quarter of an acre of water, is available only for the smallest craft. It cost to build, notwithstanding, nearly a quarter of a million sterling; or rather, approximately that sum of money was voted for its construction, which in Turkey is not quite the same thing. The town is fronted by a sort of *plage*, used as a depository for merchandise just landed or awaiting shipment. To the right of the harbour as one lands is the "Casino," as they are pleased to call the tumble-down building which serves the purposes of a hotel, eating-house, and canteen combined. When we inquired for accommodation it was to this place that we were directed. The ground floor we found to be divided into two equally gloomy and fly-blown compartments, one of which contained a long table and was used as a dining-room, while the other was crowded with Turkish officers smoking, drinking coffee, playing backgammon, and spitting on the mud floor. We ascended a rickety staircase inches deep in dust, and strewn with refuse, to the sleeping apartments, which contain anything from four to a dozen pallets of string or leather, laced into a wooden frame and supported by four legs, one of which however is often missing.

In this caravanserai we decided to put up and

* The lateen-rigged dhows of the Red Sea.

then partook of a lunch served by the proprietor of the establishment, a Jew, the very sight of whom in other circumstances might have sufficed to put one off one's food for a week. He was assisted in his duties as host by a small Arab boy, like himself a stranger to soap and water, but fortunately wearing fewer clothes.

During lunch we held a consultation. We knew that we had by no means done with the landing authorities in spite of the fact that, though our ship was sailing in a few hours and there would be no other for a fortnight, they had not even demanded our passports. I was in favour of waiting till the ship had gone and then calling on the chief of the police to explain our object in coming to the country and invite his assistance. The arrival of a couple of policemen with a request that we should present ourselves forthwith at the "Seraya" terminated the discussion. We found the Government offices—the word really means a palace—to be another unstable-looking erection, situated a hundred yards or so from the Casino, facing the sea. The "Commissaire," that is the officer in charge of the police, received us politely: much bowing, cigarettes, the inevitable cup of coffee, and remarks about the weather. His official position compelled him, so it appeared, to pursue certain formalities in all cases, even with the most distinguished visitors, and might he see our passports? We were delighted. The careful and methodical way in which these duties were carried out by the Ottoman police under the new *régime* was, as Abdul Wahid observed, the admiration of every true friend of progress. The passports were accordingly handed over and subjected to a careful scrutiny. Mine seemed to puzzle the Commissaire, the more perhaps for the fact that he was reading it upside down. In the end he scribbled something on the back and returned them, asking why we had come to the Yemen and where we wanted to go. I told him that I was an explorer bound for the unknown interior of Arabia, and that Abdul Wahid was a learned antiquary who had come there to buy books, and that we both proposed to go up to Sanaa the next day if possible. The Commissaire was truly grieved. Most unluckily all the transport available had been com-

mandeered for some Turkish officers just arrived, and we should have to wait several days before the mules required for ourselves and our escort could be procured. An escort he told us was quite essential, as the road was infested with robbers; but he himself would arrange everything for us and let us know when we could go. On this we took our leave.

The next morning we had our first interview with the Mutassarif (Lieutenant-Governor). Informed of our arrival and intentions, by the Commissaire presumably, His Excellency lost no time in requiring our presence.

I saw at once that we had to deal with a bad man—from our point of view. He was a middle-aged Albanian with long thick hair, a heavy moustache, and extraordinarily bright eyes. His staccato speech and constant twitching of the hands evidenced a neurotic temperament. He almost snatched my passport from me, read it hurriedly, the right way up, and examined attentively the *visas* on the back, commenting on them aloud. When he came to "Tripoli in Barbary" he put the document down and fixed me with a prolonged mesmeric stare, under which I preserved as sphynx-like an expression as I could command. Since my passport bore the stamps and *visas* of nearly every country in the Near East, this struck me as curious at the time—but of course it may have been mere coincidence.

Questioning me further, he asked where I came from, and here arose a difficulty due to a confusion of thought to which our habit of saying Englishman when we mean Briton often gives rise. There are some things about our country that no Turk can ever quite comprehend. One is our system of family names, another our counties. When he asked this question I told him I was an Englishman. "Yes, yes," he burst out, choking with excitement, "but what sort of an Englishman? Are you an Irishman or a Scotchman or what?" "None of these," I replied, "an Englishman *tout bonnement*." "Heavens!" exclaimed the Mutassarif, "I am an Albanian, this man is a Syrian, that man is a Sharkas, but we are all Ottoman. What part of England do you come from, then?"

I explained at some length, but without making him understand. Turning from me to Abdul Wahid he began

questioning him in the same way, and soon elicited the fact that he was a Sheie, on which he made a contemptuous comment. This surprised me, for the partisans of the new *régime* are not supposed to recognize these sectarian differences, and few Turks of this class care much about religion in any form. The explanation was forthcoming later, but the immediate result was to make Abdul Wahid very angry. Though by no means of a quarrelsome disposition, Abdul Wahid is irritable on this one point. If one wants to excite him it is only necessary to say that Abu Bakar was a better man than Ali, in order to make quite sure of having to listen for the next hour or so to a dissertation intended to prove the contrary.

Several other people were present at this interview, among them the Kadhi of Hodeidah, who nodded in approval of Abdul Wahid's angry remonstrance—at which the Mutassarif shrugged his shoulders and changed the subject. The relations between us were evidently not improved, and though we left with a promise that an escort should be found for us eventually, it was qualified by a warning that we should have to stay some time in Hodeidah, and that the Mutassarif would want to see us again to make further inquiries.

He saw us again the next day, for I knew better than to let him lead every time, or think that I was willing to wait his good pleasure to see me. I told him that I wanted to go up to Sanaa at once, and had come to ask when the mules would be ready. If there was to be any long delay I preferred to make my own arrangements. The Mutassarif repeated in fairly polite terms that we should have to wait for a time, then, addressing Abdul Wahid in Persian, a language the others present did not understand, he told him that it was no good our coming to the Seraya again, that he did not intend to let us go, and that as far as he, Abdul Wahid, was concerned, being an Ottoman subject, the sooner he left the country the better. He added that he was suspicious of us both. The object of this was quite plain : the sense of his words was sure to be conveyed to me directly we got outside, and if the British Consul or any one else got nasty about it, he could always deny having said anything of the

sort since I did not, or professed not, to understand Persian. This is a good typical specimen of what the Turks consider diplomacy.

I was told afterwards that if I had got to know this man better I should have come to like him. He had been educated for "the Church"—but had abandoned the career of an Aalim for that of a soldier, while continuing his theological studies as a recreation. His knowledge of the law was, so the Kadhi told me, profound ; in fact, he would probably have distinguished himself in almost any line. He spoke Arabic and Persian with great fluency and cultured style. His French was excellent, though marred by an unfortunate habit he had acquired of referring to any third person as "*ce-cochon-là*," regardless of the fact that his interlocutor might not care about having his friends indicated to him in that way. Though very unpopular with the townspeople, he was admitted to be a good soldier, and, a far less common virtue in Turkey, he was said to be unbribable. He suffered from a morbid dread of assassination, particularly by poison. At this second interview we met the dragoman of the British Vice-Consulate, who was acting for the Consul during the latter's absence on leave. I had had no dealings so far with the Consulate, because it is always preferable, when possible, to manage these things unofficially. Once introduced to him, however, I decided to confide our case to him in his official capacity, and, having done so, wrote at his suggestion an official letter, begging the good offices of the Consul with the local authorities, to induce them to grant the escort and other assistance necessary for us to proceed to Sanaa without further delay. Thereupon, also in his official capacity, he wrote to the Mutassarif requesting that the necessary arrangements might be made. He told me that it was not likely this letter would be answered unless he insisted on it, and he strongly advised me to await the arrival of the Vice-Consul himself, who was due in about a fortnight, and in the meantime to have no further dealings with the Turkish authorities, and if sent for by them to pay no attention to the summons.

The subjects of the great Powers are protected throughout the Ottoman Empire by what are known as the

"capitulations." These are concessions granted by, or extorted from, the Porte at various times, which have the effect of removing foreigners in Turkey from Turkish jurisdiction. For their justification Europe urges that the Turkish system of jurisprudence is not in conformity with modern civilization, nor can the administration of impartial justice be relied upon where foreigners are concerned.

A foreigner, therefore, belonging to a Power to which capitulations have been granted is subject, not to Turkish law, but to that of his own country. In criminal cases he is tried, not by a Turkish court, but before his own Consul; and in cases beyond the jurisdiction of the latter, before a judge belonging to his own country, who resides in Constantinople and makes periodical circuits in order to try such cases. When an Ottoman subject and a foreigner are parties to a civil suit, the action may be brought before a Turkish court provided that the Consul concerned or his representative be present. There are also rules for the procedure in other cases, as where both parties are subjects of different foreign Powers.

In ordinary circumstances the Turkish police cannot legally arrest a foreigner under the capitulations, search him, enter his house, or interfere with him in any way except by permission of his Consul.

In certain very special circumstances, when actual violence is threatened, when it is impossible to communicate with the Consul, or in case of armed rebellion, the authorities are justified in dispensing with this permission provided that the facts of the case are reported at once to the Consul concerned.

It does not appear that a state of siege has the effect of suspending these guarantees even temporarily: but foreigners seem liable to trial by court martial in such conditions provided that their Consul be represented.

The reason for this rather lengthy reference to the legal aspect of the capitulations will appear. It became of great importance to us later on. A few only of the principal points have been mentioned; there is much more, relating to the position of foreign companies, banks, and so on, which though interesting enough would be out

of place here. It may be mentioned that other countries beside Turkey have been forced to grant capitulations to the European Powers: in some instances, in that of Japan for example, these privileges have been voluntarily given up when the progress of the country granting them seemed to justify their surrender.

The capitulations are a thorn in the side of many a Turkish official, who finds himself powerless before them to act toward foreigners in the manner his fears or rapacity would dictate. Thus it is that in a Turkish town we find that most of the richer and more prosperous citizens claim foreign nationality. This is more particularly the case in such places as Hodeidah, where, though there are no Englishmen, there is a large community of British Indians, which depends for its prosperity on the vigilance and firmness of the British Consul. To all this is due the stipulation made by the Porte that no foreigner can own land in the interior of the Arabian provinces.

The term "Dragoman" is a corruption of a word meaning "interpreter." It was a somewhat inappropriate title in this case, for our friend, the Consular dragoman, knew no language except Arabic, and, as he said himself, not much of that. He was of Persian extraction, but had been born in Hodeidah and lived there all his life. What he did not know about the place and the people was not worth knowing.

When it became evident that we should have to stay some time in Hodeidah, we decided to leave the Casino and seek quarters elsewhere. Eventually we hired the top story of a small house in the market—to which we removed ourselves and our belongings. The houses in Hodeidah generally consist of three or four stories, built of stone or brick. It is usual to build over part of the flat roof with a mud and wattle shed open on one side, which adds an extra story, and is the pleasantest part of the house to sleep in—especially in the hot weather.

We had had quite enough of the Casino. It was full of Turks, officers and soldiers of all ranks, who dined at sundown and then retired upstairs, where they changed into their nightgowns and sat talking till all hours. What with them and the vermin which infested the place,

it was difficult to get any sleep and impossible to get any private conversation.

The town of Hodeidah is divided into two parts by a wall, roughly semicircular in shape, which reaches the shore at both ends. The old town, situated within this space, consists of tall stone houses, narrow streets, and covered markets. Outside the wall and bordering on it, there is a large area of thatched houses and compounds, recalling the native villages of Uganda and other parts of Africa.

It is a dirty, insanitary place, and by no means healthy, though in so far as the climate is concerned, it compares favourably with Massawa, on the other side of the Red Sea. The heat is not insupportable even in summer, owing to the breeze, which seldom fails entirely. The water-supply is plentiful and good compared to that of most of the Red Sea ports. The humidity of the atmosphere is extreme, and it is necessary to keep a watchful eye on such things as steel instruments, which may become ruined in a few hours if not attended to.

The population is very mixed. The mercantile class consists mostly of British Indians, both Moslems and "Banyans" being represented, and Greeks. Beside the Consular officers, there are a few Europeans engaged in commerce. Somalis, Abyssinians, and Arabs from Aden and Hadramout are very numerous. Most of the inhabitants seem to be entitled to foreign protection—British or Italian. It is surprising how few Arabs from the highland country are to be seen in Hodeidah.

The principal article of export is coffee, which grows on the lower slopes of the hills in the interior, and is shipped from Hodeidah, which has supplanted the better known Mocha as the centre of this industry. Imports are of less consequence than might be expected, for the Yemen produces itself practically all it requires.

A fair-sized garrison is kept at Hodeidah, and as it is also the depot for the stations in the interior, the place is always full of soldiers even in peace time. The only defensive work, beside the over-built town wall, is a small fort to the north of the town, so much in need of repair, or rather reconstruction, that when it is necessary to fire a gun for saluting purposes the piece is taken outside

for fear that the concussion might cause the whole fort to collapse.

I will pass over the time we spent here in as few words as possible. Thanks to the kindness of the dragoman we were less bored than we otherwise should have been. He warned us that the authorities were highly suspicious concerning us and that we were closely watched. This indeed was sufficiently obvious, for the Turkish policeman is far from being a Sherlock Holmes.

A few days before the Consul was expected to arrive we were sent for by the "Commissaire." This in my case, in view of the fact that the Consulate had communicated with the local authorities, was an impertinence of which the dragoman told me I was to take no notice, but Abdul Wahid of course had to go. He was told that a telegram had been received from the Vali (Governor-General) forbidding our journey to Sanaa.

This of course was the merest bluff, a *ballon d'essai* of which the Mutassarif took very good care to make no mention in his correspondence with the Consul on the subject. Abdul Wahid's indignation however was really very funny. He had been such an enthusiastic partisan of "Young Turkey," and had believed so fervently that the constitution had regenerated his countrymen, that it was particularly irritating to him to be treated in this way before one who had always been a "scoffer." What crime had he committed, he asked, and where was liberty? I was sure I didn't know. Why any one should suppose that the substitution of an aged recluse for that very capable man Abdul Hamid, and the summoning of a few hundred so-called deputies to waste the public money and listen to discussions in a language that many of them do not half understand (and few of them would be much the wiser if they did), should modify the whole character of an administration which is the growth of centuries, was what I thought really remarkable.

Abdul Wahid could not see it in this light. Like the Cardinal at Rheims "he called for his candle, his bell and his book" and solemnly cursed Young Turkey root, branch, and derivative. The Mutassarif he said was undoubtedly an "ibn wazagh," a reptile of so exceedingly noxious a character that it may properly be killed within

the sacred precincts of the Haram itself. Disheartened, he pointed out that a total eclipse of the moon had occurred on the night of our arrival, and in face of this portent it was sheer foolishness to go on with the expedition. I had much better give up the idea and go on with him to Persia. To this I responded with the Arabic equivalent of "Rot!"

Abdul Wahid was really anxious to see Sanaa, and as I could not afford to keep him long, and he was no use to me in Hodeidah, I gave him leave to go up on his own account if he could get permission. Abdul Wahid did his best: he got one of the most influential and respected citizens, a personal friend of the Mutassarif, to accompany him to the latter. In spite of the fact that this gentleman had received letters from a London bank proving that Abdul Wahid was exactly what he pretended to be, the Mutassarif was both obdurate and insulting. He told Abdul Wahid that he did not believe a word of his story, that there was a ship sailing in a few days and he had better take it, "for," he concluded, thumping the table, "if you stay here for ever, neither you nor that friend of yours shall take one single step outside Hodeidah." "We'll see about that," I thought when this remark was reported to me.

All this was annoying, but I was not very much concerned thereby, for I had experienced much the same sort of thing before. The Consul, when he arrived, so the dragoman told me, would soon set matters right. The Turks always went on in this way and did what they could to prevent Europeans going to Sanaa, but they generally had to give way in the end.

At the same time it was evident that Abdul Wahid could be of no further help to me, and that his presence was actually the cause of suspicion concerning my intentions. I therefore gave him leave to go, as suggested, by the next steamer.

The hostility shown to us was, I learned, to be explained in part by the persistent rumours in circulation that another rising was imminent. This subject was supposed not to be discussed, and any one mentioning it did so with bated breath. We were warned on no account to speak of the Imam—particularly in the presence of a

certain Afghan who had lately been insinuating himself into our company, whose generally unwholesome appearance was heightened by the disgusting condition of his front teeth, which he was fond of displaying in an oily smile. This man was, we were told, in charge of the police detailed to watch our movements.

Our landing indeed had been unfortunate in several ways. A quarrel was in progress at the time between the Turkish authorities and the Italian Consul-General. The facts of this incident, which became famous as the "Sambook affair," are worth relating.

Somewhere about the middle of October a Turkish gunboat patrolling the Arabian coast discovered a sambook landing cargo on the shore. This cargo was being received by a caravan of camels which made off when the gunboat came in sight. It certainly did look fishy, and the officer in charge was probably quite justified in arresting the Abyssinian captain on a charge of gun-running, in spite of his protest that the cargo was only ginger, the fact of what was left of it seeming to bear out this assertion, and his having hoisted the Italian flag. The gunboat then went on to tow the sambook into Hodeidah, the latter still flying the Italian flag. This annoyed the Italian Consul-General, who claimed that nothing had been proved, and that the sambook should be handed over to him and the captain released. The Vali however asserted that the circumstantial evidence was sufficient, and that the sambook was forfeit. A court of inquiry was ordered to assemble and decide what the sambook really did contain. The result of its deliberations was communicated to the Italian representative in the following terms: "*In conformity with orders* received from His Excellency the Governor-General *the Court decide* that the cargo was contraband and that the sambook must be confiscated."

The Italian Consul-General, as he says himself, is a man of peace, but there are limits. He swore that the Vali should repent this outrage. Meanwhile the honour of Italy was in his charge, and it was in safe keeping. Having arrayed himself in full uniform, put on all his orders and his Consular sword, he proceeded, together with a handful of his Kavasses, to row out to the sambook

and take possession of it in the name of Italy, while sending an intimation to the Mutassarif that he was doing so.

This incident caused a great sensation: the whole population of Hodeidah spent that day on the beach waiting events, and gazing at the little sambook rolling at anchor in the heavy swell, in which sat that very indifferent sailor the heroic representative of Italy, with his devoted followers.

Meanwhile the "local authorities" held high council in the "Seraya." "*Ce-cochon-là*" was in great perplexity. This open defiance of Ottoman authority must have a disastrous effect on the minds of the Arabs with whom, as the dragoman put it, "the beach was black." On the other hand, if he attempted to retake the sambook by force, the Consul would probably be killed, in which case Italy was likely to insist on himself being hanged just by way of a preliminary, which point, if it did not suit the Porte to go to war, would be conceded, in the hope of lessening the amount of indemnity to be paid; a policy which, however sound from the taxpayer's point of view, would be none the less unpleasant for the Mutassarif. Eventually he telegraphed to the Vali for instructions, much to the annoyance of that high functionary, who disliked being saddled with a responsibility that he considered his subordinate ought to have taken on himself. He decided wisely to do nothing; so the unfortunate Consul, who would have died rather than abandon his position, remained on board for many days, during which the interest and excitement showed no signs of diminishing. Eventually the Mutassarif, by no means a bad sort, if the truth were known, hit on a brilliant idea. On the occasion of the Sultan's birthday he held a reception, to which he sent the Consul an invitation under a flag of truce! His advances were not repulsed; the Consul accepted, with the tacit understanding that the sambook should not be seized during his absence, and once ashore did not go aboard again. A few days later the arrival of an Italian cruiser relieved the tension.

Some people were of the opinion that the Consul was a fool to act as he did; but I have always considered that it was very sporting of him.

The real discussion now began, and the original matter

in dispute—whether the sambook contained ginger or gunpowder—was soon lost sight of. In the course of the controversy as to whether the Italian Consul was justified or not in taking this strong line of action many thousands of pounds went in cablegrams. The Turks demanded the dismissal of the Consul, the Italians that of the Governor. It was finally decided to hold a joint commission, and some months later the delegates arrived, the Italian escorted by a large cruiser, the Turk by five gun-boats. Meanwhile the unfortunate sambook, left to itself, began to fill with water, and at the time of our arrival was in imminent danger of foundering.

The commissioners laboured long at the examination of witnesses, and even went up the coast to the spot where the sambook had been captured, though, the Arab war having begun, a large force was necessary to escort them there. They failed, however, to arrive at a settlement, and at last it was agreed to refer the whole matter to arbitration, Great Britain to be appointed umpire. The sambook and its cargo together were worth perhaps £100.

How the matter would have ended is doubtful, though on the face of it the Turkish case seemed the stronger. The parties to this dispute having since decided to submit all their differences to the only really satisfactory arbitrament, we shall never know for certain.

. . . . . .

The British Consul came in due course, much to my relief, though not by the Khedivial boat, as we had expected, but from Aden. Arriving there from Europe, he had run across a friend of his, who was captain of a ship carrying pilgrims to the quarantine island of Kamaran, and as this was a station that the Consul was bound to inspect, he had decided to go there with him. In consequence, when he did arrive at Hodeidah, he was in quarantine. Learning how matters stood, Captain Newby, who commanded, was so kind as to invite me aboard, and the Consul, to ask me to stay with him in Kamaran till we could return together to Hodeidah. I gladly accepted both invitations, bade farewell to Abdul Wahid, who was leaving by the Egyptian ship bound for Aden, and boarded the "Magidie," not sorry to escape, if only temporarily, from the dirt and discomfort of the life we had been leading in Hodeidah.

The captain of this ship, like all sensible people who have experienced hardships at first hand, had made himself just as comfortable as he possibly could. His cook was an artist, and his chief steward, in the matter of compounding cocktails, had nothing to learn from the most experienced American barman. In the captain's opinion, a concoction known as a Virgin, among the numerous ingredients of which gin supplies the *leit motif*, is the most satisfactory thing to poison one's self with in the Red Sea ; and after submitting the proposition to the test of numerous experiments, I came to a like conclusion.

Dr. G. A. Richardson, the Consul, was interested and amused by my account of our adventures in Hodeidah. He attached little importance to what had taken place, for the course of events might have been foreseen. Having spent ten years in Hodeidah, and possessing a unique knowledge of the character of the people, he could forecast to a nicety what a Turkish official would think and do in almost any given circumstances. Nor did he think that it would be difficult to induce the authorities to see reason, once we had disabused them of the " spy " idea.

I enjoyed the few days I spent on board very much. Both my companions were *raconteurs* of a calibre uncommon even in the Red Sea, where most people who have spent any time, whether ashore or afloat, have something to relate worth the telling. At Kamaran we parted with much regret from our hospitable host, to instal ourselves in the house kept for the reception of the Consul on his visits to the island.

Kamaran, erroneously described on most maps as British, is an island about forty miles north of Hodeidah, belonging to Turkey, and used as a quarantine station for pilgrims on their way to and from Mecca. The pilgrims are segregated in enclosed camps on one side of the island, and kept there for a number of days that varies with the circumstances. There is a distillery and ice-making plant, a well-equipped hospital, and a number of houses for the accommodation of the medical staff.

On the other side there are a small native village and a few date-palms ; but otherwise the island is bare and practically devoid of vegetation. The administration

is in the hands of the international quarantine board, and the doctors and other officials are very cosmopolitan. At the time of our visit the season was at an end, all the pilgrims had left for Mecca, and most of the staff had already departed on leave or to other employment. We messed with the "director," a Russian, and an Armenian architect who shared his house.

We spent a pleasant week here in spite of the plague of flies, which always occurs at this season, when the pilgrims have left and the flies desert the empty camp to collect together in the only places still inhabited. There were more flies here than even at Yembu, where, before putting a piece of food into one's mouth, it is necessary to blow on it, hard, in order that the taste of the morsel may not be obscured by adventitious foreign bodies.

Apropos of this, I must confess here to two highly heretical opinions, one being that Pharaoh is the finest character in history, and the other that the quarantine laws regarding pilgrims are absolutely useless. In support of the second of these extraordinary views, I urge that all this extravagant expenditure failed to prevent cholera breaking out in Mecca in 1907–8, and spreading from there to St. Petersburg; that sporadic cases of plague and cholera occur at Jiddah with almost unfailing regularity, and that, if the truth were known, both diseases are endemic on the Arabian coast.

On the mainland, opposite Kamaran, are situated the salt-mines of Saleef, which we visited. Several Europeans are employed there, and the manager himself is an Englishman. There is a small Turkish garrison. Most of the salt goes to India.

News reached us, while we were at Kamaran, of the dismissal of the Mutassarif. We never heard the real reason for this, but it probably had to do with the "sambook affair." The Consul was sorry, for he had found this man more sensible and easier to deal with than most of those who had held that post during the decade he had spent in Hodeidah.

We had a rather rough time going down the coast. The small steamer in which we made the voyage was too short for the sea. November is the season of the strong

south wind in this part of the Red Sea, and it is surprising how rough it can be at times. Well to the west of the steam-lane between Suez and Aden, there is a long narrow abyss running parallel with the coast where the water suddenly deepens by a thousand fathoms or more. So high a sea runs here at this time of year that even large steamers have to "tack" across to avoid bringing it abeam.

The Consul's household servants had not arrived when we reached Hodeidah, so we messed at first with the Italian Consul-General. The British and Italian Consulates are in one block. The hero of the sambook affair was kindness and hospitality itself. Conversant with many languages, he is a profound Arabic scholar, with a wide knowledge of the literature. We were interested to hear his candid opinion of the late Mutassarif, which coincided with my own, and I not long afterwards found myself in entire agreement with him on the subject of that "bad man," as he called him, Mohammed Ali Pasha, Vali of the Yemen.

The Consul lost no time in tackling the local authorities on the subject of my proposed journey, and asked them, by way of a start, what they meant by putting it about that I was a spy. It was not the intention of our benign Government, so he expressed it, that any of its subjects should be taken for spies. Of course it was denied most emphatically that any such suspicion had so much as crossed their minds. Their only desire was to aid me in every possible way; but as for the journey, what with the disturbed state of the country, the dangerous roads, and so on, it was not desirable that foreign subjects should go up to Sanaa.

This is the usual formula, and means nothing as a rule. It so happened that the Consul had just come across a *communiqué* to the press by the Grand Vizier, to the effect that perfect peace reigned in the Yemen.

However, as there was no hurry, we agreed to wait till after the festivities which take place at the time of the pilgrimage had been concluded, before pushing the matter further.

I decided to go to Aden for a few days to get some things I wanted, a servant among them. I wished, also,

to make inquiries as to the possibility of making that place my starting-point, in case I failed to get to Sanaa.

In the matter of a servant I was fortunate. The first man I asked about it sent his own boy into the street to look for one ; and he turned up presently with a nice-looking youth about eighteen years of age, whose light colour and regular features showed him to be an Arab of a stock unusually pure for Aden. This proved to be the case, for his father was not an "Adanie," but the "terror of a small Arabian town" somewhere up country, who spent his time, when no serious brigandage was on hand, in carrying on a blood-feud with a neighbouring clan, the origin of which dated back for several centuries. For many generations his ancestors had followed what is, with one exception, the oldest and most lucrative of all professions, and in the opinion of the Arabs, quite the most respectable ; he himself was the first to debase the noble traditions of his house by working for his living. Ahmad, for that was his name, had been born in the Aden Protectorate ; and on the strength of this I claimed British protection for him—a lot of use it has been to him ! He had served as scullery-boy in several establishments in Aden, and had no letters of recommendation whatever, having been kicked out of his last place, so he told me, for quarrelling with the other servants. He looked me however squarely in the face with eyes that betokened both honesty and courage, and were worth more to him as a recommendation than many "chits." I signed him on at once, and we returned together.

Once more back in Hodeidah, I found it the general opinion that trouble was impending. Several people warned me not to go up to Sanaa even should the authorities consent to assist me. The latter, however, continued to deny that anything serious was wrong, and these rumours of war are so incessant in a place like the Yemen that one soon ceases to pay attention to them. Nor do I believe that the Vali and the other officials really anticipated a serious outbreak at this stage. If they did, their neglect to provision their garrisons adequately was criminal.

The Consul made another official application for the escort which is supposed to be necessary, and is certainly

advisable. He put the case strongly, and quoted my offer to accept entire responsibility and give an undertaking in writing that no compensation should be claimable on my behalf in the event of harm befalling me anywhere in the Ottoman territory.* It was long before he succeeded in eliciting a reply, and when he did it was not a satisfactory one. Passing over all our arguments unnoticed—a style of correspondence that has since become familiar to me—"in the actual situation," so the letter ran, "the Ottoman authorities do not feel justified in assisting foreigners to travel to Sanaa." This letter reached us on the eve of the Consul's departure for Aden, where he had to spend some days on business.

Before he left I ascertained from him how the law stood on the subject. Had the Turks any right to prevent my going up to Sanaa if I chose to do so without an escort? And if I got there, could they legally turn me out? The answer to both questions was in the negative; but he said that if I was discovered leaving Hodeidah or on the road, I should certainly be sent back.

In these circumstances I decided to take French leave. Scarcely had the Consul departed, before a conspiracy was set on foot. It was necessary to act swiftly and secretly, for so far from the suspicions of the authorities concerning me having been dispelled by the assurances given, they seemed to have actually increased; so that not only was the Consulate watched day and night, but the house of the dragoman also. With the aid of one or two confederates, who must not be indicated more particularly, measures were concerted adequate to the emergency. I sounded Ahmad on the subject, warning him that we were about to do a thing that was dangerous and might get us into trouble, and that if he decided to come he must obey orders without question, and be more silent than the grave. He was quite ready to come, and, stranger still, seemed actually to like the prospect.

I was seized with a sudden indisposition which prevented my leaving the house for the three days following the Consul's departure. On the fourth day, Christmas Eve, I was sufficiently recovered to walk out to the

* One would think that it was sufficiently obvious that this undertaking did not refer to harm at the hands of the Turks themselves.

tennis ground wearing canvas shoes and carrying a racket, though as I told some people I met in the market I was not sure whether I was well enough to play. I did play, however, and remained longer than usual at the garden, in fact it was nearly dark when I started to walk home. This imprudent conduct was probably responsible for the return of the fever from which I had been suffering, and by which I was again confined to my bed the next day, at least so the police thought then, and so they continued to think till the morning of the day that Ahmad and I rode into Sanaa, having performed the journey in eighty-eight hours, which is nearly a record, I believe, for donkeys. I refer of course to the animals we were riding.

CHAPTER XII

HODEIDAH TO SANAA

The *rendezvous* was at the house of our confederate near the outskirts of the town. Ahmad was already there when I arrived: the donkeys, which had been brought there the previous day and concealed in the courtyard, were already saddled up. We proceeded to assume the disguise of Hedjazi merchants, in which, so my fellow-conspirators assured me, I was practically unrecognizable. We were taking a guide for the first stage, as it was necessary to make a rather complicated detour in order to avoid the Turkish outposts. We carried no luggage except a few clothes and a revolver apiece.

The moon did not rise till two a.m., so we decided to wait till near midnight to start, when things were quiet. As luck would have it, the night was very dark—always a good thing when dark deeds are in contemplation.

We started just before twelve o'clock, cantering over the sandy ground after our guide, who threaded his way through the dark alley ways with the confidence born of a lifetime's acquaintance with the locality. We passed to the left of the barracks, well out of earshot, went through a cemetery, traversed some rough ground, and struck the main road to Sanaa about two miles from the town. Our escape from Hodeidah was a *fait accompli*.

We were now riding through the Tehama, the hot, sandy plain that separates the lowest spurs of the mountains from the seaboard. It is preferable, in any circumstances, to perform this stage of the journey by night, for the heat and glare in the daytime, even during the winter months, are very trying. The plain is level and sandy, practically waterless, and barren but for

sparse and stunted mimosa trees. Most of the rivers starting seaward from the Yemen highlands lose themselves in this waste.

The road we were following was by no means deserted. We constantly met strings of camels bound for Hodeidah loaded with kat, fodder, and other produce from the highlands. Others, that we overtook, had come in the previous night and were now on the return journey, and several larger caravans with escorts were on their way to the interior with supplies for the troops stationed there.

An Arab can sleep on his camel as soundly as in his bed. He curls himself up on top of the bales of merchandise, or whatever else it may be, and slumbers peacefully when confident that the camel knows the way. Should the camel he is riding, which is always the leader, stray off the road, it stops, and with it the string behind, tied as they are, nose to tail. The Arab wakes up, promptly and automatically, abuses the camel for its stupidity, guides it back to the road and goes to sleep again.

Many people have noticed how much easier it is to sit up on the watch than to ride through the night without getting sleepy. The procession of trees, rocks, and other objects passing one's eyes, particularly by moonlight, produces after some hours a sort of hypnotic torpor, so that no matter how necessary vigilance may be, it requires the strongest effort of will to keep awake. As soon as it becomes light enough to see clearly, the overwhelming desire to sleep disappears, and the rider's faculties return to him, for to whatever cause the state I am describing may be due, it is certainly not to fatigue.

When the dawn broke we found that we were leaving the plain and entering among scattered, stony hills. Before sunrise we made another detour to avoid the town of Bagil, which we judged it prudent not to enter in case the garrison might have been warned to intercept us. At about nine o'clock we off-saddled at a small café by the roadside to partake of food and enjoy a short sleep. We were now about thirty miles from Hodeidah.

By midday we were again on the road, riding up a wide valley, perhaps ten miles across, flanked by lofty

mountain ranges. Evidences of cultivation began to appear, though there was little actually growing at this time of year. Near sundown we crossed two rivers of real running water—the first I had ever seen in Arabia. We halted for the night at the village of Hageilah, situated at the foot of the mountains.

Here we bade farewell to the guide who had accompanied us thus far. He had performed his part of the contract most efficiently, and I rewarded him accordingly. He was actuated, so he told me, less by the hope of gain than by his desire to score off the Hodeidah police. He advised us to enter the town of Menakha after dark, and leave before daybreak, and to keep our eyes open between that place and Sook-el-Khamis, for on that section of the road an attack by brigands was to be apprehended.

Ahmad and I excited no curiosity at Hageilah. I told a Turkish officer who asked who we were that I came from Jiddah, and was going up to Sanaa to sell turquoises.

We left before sunrise, hurried forward by a keen anxiety, for we knew that there is some limit to the stupidity of the police even in Turkey, and that the laugh would not be on our side till we had ridden through the gate of Sanaa.

Soon after leaving Hageilah we passed through a curious natural tunnel called the "Gate of the Mountains." Thenceforward we were climbing. The road zigzagged upwards till it gained the crest of a great spur shot out from the main range, which was now before us. To the right lay a great valley, steep-sided and profound; to the left high and precipitous mountains towered upwards to the cloud-line. Trees, running water, and patches of vivid green cultivation refreshed our gaze. It seemed incredible that this could be Arabia. We soon passed the first coffee groves, for the tree grows here also, though the more important plantations are farther south. The cultivation is carried out in terraces, revetted with stone, after the manner of the Maritime Alps.

As we advanced the grandeur of the scene increased. We seemed to be making for a nek, still far above us, between two conical peaks. The first villages appeared, and very different were they from the groups of mud

and wattle thatched-roof hovels of the Tehama. Narrow stone-built houses and towers, four or five stories in height, sometimes more, are packed together so closely that a respectable-sized hamlet looks like a single building. Their sites seem to be chosen solely with a view to their defensibility. Crowning rocky peaks, poised on the edge of precipices, and sometimes even on isolated boulders, they lend to the scene an air at once distinctive and menacing. Sound travels a great distance among these mountains. In the warm, still air of the morning we heard the villagers calling to one another from slope to slope over a mile or more of space.

We halted at midday for a couple of hours, then pushed forward again. The road was bad everywhere, and even perilous in parts—quite impassable for wheeled traffic except horse-artillery guns. It began to get chilly as we ascended. We gained the crest of the ridge among the clouds just before sundown. The thick mist prevented my being able to observe this celebrated position, the "Lang's Nek" of the Yemen, as closely as I should have liked; for we were compelled to make a halt here, as Menakha was less than an hour's ride forward, and it was not yet dark. We rather overdid it in the end, for before we reached the town it was impossible in the darkness and fog to see one's hand before one's face, and as the road at this point is cut out of the side of a slope that only just misses being a precipice, it was not very pleasant riding along it in these conditions. That we were nearing a centre of population was evident from the sounds of human habitation; barking of dogs, shrill cries of children, and voices that seemed to reach us sometimes from overhead, and sometimes from far below. Yet it took us a long time to reach our destination, and it was nearly eight o'clock when we at last entered Menakha. We were now about half-way to Sanaa, and more than 7,000 feet above sea-level. It was colder than charity.

We had been warned not to go to the public inn—"The Casino," as the Turks will persist in calling these places. The donkey boy had instructions to take us to a certain house, which, however, proved to be full up. We were recommended to another, which we tried with

no better success, and then decided to chuck it and chance the inn. For one thing, Menakha is not a pleasant place in which to wander about in the dark. It is built on a rock, and the streets, which resemble badly constructed staircases more than anything else, have a way of ending unexpectedly in a sheer drop of twenty feet or so. As it was one of the donkeys and its rider took a nasty toss.

We need not have bothered, for no one else was staying at "The Casino." We had in fact some difficulty in finding the proprietor. When he came we were introduced to the only furnished guest-chamber, a tiny room on the second floor, quite air-tight, containing the remains of a carpet and a couple of dirty mattresses, and fairly alive with fleas. When I made the usual inquiries concerning the sanitary arrangements, the proprietor said there weren't any ; but that the unoccupied rooms might be used for any purpose whatsoever. Nothing in the way of food was obtainable at this hour, but if we would only be patient, said our host, his son would bring us some tea.

I had with me some boiled eggs and plum pudding, on which we dined ; then, with a blanket apiece, and the spare clothes I had brought divided between us, we passed the night, if not in comfort, at any rate in comparative warmth. The donkey boy slept with his animals in the stable, and took this opportunity to fuddle himself with hashish, to my great annoyance, as we were late in starting the next morning in consequence.

We were not fairly under way till near sunrise. It was a bright, still morning, and a hard frost. We ran for the first mile or so, partly to get as far as possible from Menakha before they began to wake up there, and partly to get warm. So rough in surface and steep is the road, that it is almost impossible to ride over it at any pace. We were descending the side of a magnificent ravine, which opened out about 4,000 feet below into a desolate-looking country of rugged foot-hills, beyond which rose again the imposing mass of the main range. Our destination that day, Sook-el-Khamis, about twenty miles from Menakha, was visible at starting. It took us over three hours to reach the foot of the spur, but crossing the valley it was better going. The aspect of this

parched scrub-covered country recalls the bush veld of South Africa. It is dry and deserted at the present time, but the soil is probably not unfertile, and with irrigation something might be made of it, for it must enjoy a good rainfall.

We passed small military posts every few miles. These are generally placed on hills some little distance off the road, which they are supposed to protect. The Turks hold the mistaken view that the best position for a work is invariably the most commanding position, and the value of barbed wire for defensive purposes is not appreciated by them.

This was the part of the road that we had been told was dangerous, and indeed the country looked wild enough. It was just the sort of place where one would expect to meet brigands. None, however, appeared, rather I think to the disappointment of Ahmad, who was carrying a real firearm for the first time in his life, and looking forward to an opportunity for using it.

By three o'clock in the afternoon we had left this sterile valley behind us, and were ascending the fertile slopes of the great plateau above. Before sundown we had entered Sook-el-Khamis, "Thursday's Market," and installed ourselves in the caravanserai kept for the use of travellers. It is practically the only building in the place not occupied by the soldiers. This place is, I believe, the headquarters of the regiment holding the road between here and Menakha. There was a garrison, at this time, of two or three companies of infantry, and a few guns.

These rest-houses, "simsarahs" as they call them locally, "Khans" elsewhere in the East, are seldom pleasant places to spend the night, but this particular one, at Sook-el-Khamis, is notorious even in the Yemen for its fleas. European travellers and well-to-do Turks generally carry their own tents, and give these places a wide berth. We, however, had no choice, and were fortunate in having the only room to ourselves. Ahmad brought in a bowl of sour milk, which he put down on the floor; five minutes later its surface was black with fleas. Tired as we were, it was almost impossible to get any sleep. The Arabs usually carry a sort of sleeping bag made of sheepskin, into which they get head first, and then fasten up the mouth with

a piece of rope. This unhygienic method does to some extent protect one from the vermin.

The donkey boy came while we were eating our supper to say that it was impossible to go on the next morning. The donkeys were worn out, and if we tried to reach Sanaa on the morrow one at least would fall down dead before we got there. Moreover, the road ahead of us was in a very dangerous state, the children of the Imam were "sniping" beyond Senam Pasha, and it was no longer possible to travel except in large parties. He wanted to wait for the mail, which was expected the next day, and which, even in peace time, has a good escort. I told him that we would ride forward till all the donkeys were dead and then walk, and that if all the children of Iblis the damned were on the road we must still go through the next day, and that if he smoked any more hashish before we got to Sanaa I would break every bone in his misbegotten body. With mingled threats and promises we brought him to his senses, and started in the dark for the last stage of the journey. Had I given way the adventure would have ended here, for by noon the following day the murder was out.

For an hour or so we stumbled forward in the dark before a very beautiful dawn and sunrise revealed the magnificent panorama before us. We were now at an altitude nearly as great as that of Menakha, the cold was extreme, and a thick mist arose with the sun. About eight o'clock we crossed a swiftly running river, and by noon we had passed the fortified station known to the Turks as Senam Pasha, and to the Arabs as Matinah. The scenery of the plateau which we had now reached was very different from what had gone before. The country was open and undulating, with groups of stony kopjes here and there, in place of the mountains we had left behind. Little was to be seen growing at this season, but the extensive areas of stubble attested the fertility of the ground. Many villages, some of considerable size, were to be seen from the road, which was now crowded with travellers both mounted and afoot, as well as with beasts of burden laden with produce of various kinds. We passed several parties of soldiers working on the road, one or two of whom were Syrians

and ran up, thinking from the "akal" I was wearing that I might be a fellow-countryman. For some reason or other the Government has expended a great deal of trouble and money on this part of the road, where, the country being more or less level, there was little occasion for it ; while neglecting altogether the mountainous part, where the track is positively dangerous.

We were now nearly at the end of the journey, and it was as well, for our poor donkeys were almost done. We had spared them all we could by walking and leading, but the pace had been too hot, and but for the fact that neither Ahmad nor myself can scale nine stone, we should never have got here at this pace without the change of mounts, for which it was not, in the circumstances, possible to arrange.

At last we passed over a col and there, about 1,000 feet below us, in a wide valley, lay the city of Sanaa. We halted for a few minutes to rest and enjoy the view. The valley, I observed, ran approximately north and south, and though devoid of natural vegetation, was extensively cultivated. Sanaa itself seemed to me about the size of Medina, which it somewhat resembles, but the walled city was connected by an almost continuous chain of houses and gardens with another town as large as, if not larger than, Sanaa itself. This, I was told, was Raudha, and a lofty mountain behind Sanaa, crowned by a fort, was the celebrated "Gebel Nugoom." Two Arab merchants, natives of Sanaa, who had ridden with us for the last few miles, took great pleasure in pointing out the beauties of the scene. Their pride in it was quite touching. Sanaa they told me was well known to be the largest, the best situated, and the most beautiful city in the world. For salubrity of climate, abundance and purity of water, and fertility, no other spot on earth could justly be compared with the valley that lay before us. They would evidently have been greatly disappointed had I failed to appreciate it, but, though forced to admit that in the course of my travels I had encountered cities even larger than Sanaa, I was able to say quite honestly that I had never seen one more beautifully situated or more picturesque in itself.

We had to push on, however, for it was past three o'clock, and we were a good two hours' ride from the gate, which was closed at sundown. Were we to arrive late we should have to sleep at a "simsarah" without, which would be undesirable for several reasons.

Our donkeys, now that the goal was in sight, took heart anew; soon we had descended the mountain and were cantering over the plain, and a few minutes after five o'clock we were through the gate. As Ahmad remarked in his disrespectful way, "we had laughed in the governor's beard."

Every one entering the city of Sanaa by any gate is compelled to give an account of himself to the police officer stationed there. "Your Excellency's name?" inquired that official with the impartial politeness that in the Turkish character covers a multitude of sins. I told him. "Not the Englishman?" "Yes," said I. This information was received by the policeman and a group of officers who were listening with some hilarity. Our two Sanaa friends, who, much intrigued, begged enlightenment, were likewise entertained. The Arab is very much like the Irishman in some ways: he dearly loves a row and is always "agin the Government."

I heard afterwards that the Hodeidah police had only become suspicious that very morning: they wired to Sanaa, and orders were sent to all the posts to intercept us, which, thanks to the endurance of our plucky little donkeys, arrived too late.

I had with me a letter of introduction to the only European in Sanaa, Signor Caprotti, an Italian. I lost no time in presenting this. The Chevalier, when he had read it and inquired the circumstances of my arrival, made no secret of his consternation. It was most emphatically his opinion that there would be trouble over the business. This consideration, however, did not deter him from extending the heartiest welcome to a guest whom many people in the circumstances might very excusably have declined to entertain. Installed in his house, I sent off the donkey boy to seek quarters in a simsarah, rewarding him liberally—with something extra to ensure that the donkeys were well fed during the few days they were to rest before returning, and a promise

to send Ahmad round daily to see that this fund was not misappropriated.

The Chevalier Caprotti and his brother established themselves in Sanaa in 1888, but the latter, unhappily, had died of typhus some years before my visit. The Turks, in accordance with their principles, had at one time made every effort to get rid of him, but the Italian Government, which has ideas of its own regarding these matters, had turned a deaf ear to all representations on the subject, and there he remained. The Ottoman authorities, who accepted him at first as a necessary incubus, were later glad to make use of his knowledge and tact in dealing with the Arabs to conduct for them certain delicate negotiations in which their own diplomacy had failed. He had been through all the troubles, and had stood two sieges already, in the last of which his wise foresight had enabled him, by laying in an enormous stock of provisions, to save many poor people from starvation, when the rich Turks and Arabs would do nothing to help them. His charitable conduct did not pass unappreciated, for when the Imam's levies entered the town his property was respected, and he himself honourably treated. Engaged in commerce, he has yet found time to devote himself to other pursuits, and Western science owes more to his energy in the matter of collecting and transmitting copies of inscriptions, works of art, and objects of archæological interest, than to the labours of any individual explorer. Few European travellers to Sanaa during the last thirty years have not had occasion in recounting their experiences to pay a tribute to his kindness and hospitality.

A bath and a good dinner make a wonderful difference sometimes ; and on this occasion I was much in need of both. As we did not get on well in Arabic, for I found the Sanaa dialect difficult to understand, we conversed in French. The Chevalier advised me to take and furnish a house of my own as soon as might be. In his opinion a revolt on a larger scale than any that had preceded it was impending, though he did not think Sanaa itself would be invested again : in which, however, he proved to be wrong.

I lost no time in following his advice. Furnished houses being unobtainable, I was forced to furnish one

for myself. The house I chose was situated at the end of the town near the citadel : it consisted of a porch, with one room over it, leading into a rectangular courtyard which contained the kitchen and was enclosed on two sides by a wall, the third side being the porch, and the fourth the house itself, which had three stories and a flat roof. Furnishing in Arab style is not a very formidable business. It is merely necessary to cover the low terraces built out from the walls with mattresses and cushions ; to cover the floors with plenty of carpets ; to put up curtains for the windows, and put about a few small tables for ash-trays, coffee cups, and so on. The bedroom furniture is still more simple. Carpets, a mattress, and a pile of cushions are required, but most Arabs sleep in the living rooms. I decided to furnish three rooms, two for myself, and one—that over the porch—to serve as a guest-chamber : for I hoped later on to entertain Arabs from the Eastern country and others who might come to Sanaa from the parts I wished to reach. The whole of the furniture, crockery, cooking utensils and so forth came to about £40. The carpets are the expensive part. I had to pay about £1 per month in rent for the house ; this was far too much, but I did not complain, for the stranger, especially the stranger who wants things in a hurry, must expect to pay. Within a week of my arrival in Sanaa I was able to move in. At Signor Caprotti's suggestion I engaged two more servants, one of them, an Abyssinian, as cook, the other, an Arab of Sanaa, for household work. I deemed it advisable to engage one native owing to Ahmad being almost as much a stranger as myself to the manners and customs of the Zaidies. Both these men had been in the service of Burchardt, the German traveller who, together with the Italian Vice-Consul, was killed in the Yemen in 1908. They seem to have fallen victims to an ambuscade of brigands whose only motive was the hope of plunder. So far as is known, the murder was not due to fanaticism or anti-foreign feeling. "The Napani," as my servant the Sanaa Arab was called, was with them at the time, and gave me an account of the incident which did not tally with the official version : several Turks with whom I talked did not scruple to suggest that

he had a hand in the business himself. The affair gave rise to much trouble and some friction between the Governments concerned, though the Turkish authorities could not fairly be held in any way responsible for it. The roads throughout the whole country are very dangerous, and while the disturbed state of affairs continues it is impossible to police them properly. Signor Caprotti was attacked on one occasion while on his way to Hodeidah : his servant was killed, his mule was shot under him, and he himself, lying on the ground, was shot at by a brigand from a distance of ten yards. Those who know Signor Caprotti will agree with him that his escape on this occasion was little short of miraculous. His assailant must have been the worst shot in Arabia.

The death of Burchardt was all the more deplorable for the fact that he was a careful and scientific traveller who would probably, had he lived, have added much to our knowledge of the Yemen and what lies beyond. He was engaged at the time in writing a book on the Sanaa dialect and its affinities, and he had in the course of his travels taken many excellent photographs of this picturesque and interesting country.

My first fortnight in Sanaa passed uneventfully. Signor Caprotti warned me that, while the Arabs were somewhat doubtful and suspicious concerning me, the Turks professed no two opinions : I was there as an agent of the British Government, and my purpose was espionage pure and simple. Nevertheless, the days passed and no communication reached me from the authorities. The fact was that there was nothing for them to say, for though the right of the Ottoman Government to prevent a foreigner travelling to any place may be conceded in practice, it is, under the capitulations, an extremely difficult matter to secure his deportation once he has got there.

It was, of course, very unfortunate that they should have this idea, but I hoped to live it down. As regards the Arabs I endeavoured, by expending a little money in charity, and by other means, to allay their hostility, while I trusted to the Consul's diplomacy to put the matter right with the authorities when he returned from Aden and discovered the little joke I had been compelled

to play on them. I was in the habit, in pursuit of the first object, of attending the evening prayer at the great mosque, and it certainly came rather as a shock when I received urgent warnings from two quite independent sources, one of them beyond question reliable, not to go there again because the Turks had hired a man to assassinate me.* The deed accomplished, the murderer was to escape, and the crime to be attributed to religious fanaticism; which would serve the double purpose of getting rid of me and giving the Ottoman authorities an excuse for objecting to any more Europeans coming up to Sanaa. I do not insinuate that the Vali was cognisant of or responsible for this ingenious if dirty trick, but I believe I know who was. They manage these things unofficially in Turkey, but notwithstanding my opinion of Mohammed Ali Pasha, I do not think he would associate himself with knavery of this sort, and had he known of the design would have vetoed it at once. It will seem odd to some of my readers that I should have been able so easily to avoid the trap, assuming that it actually existed. This fact will not surprise those who have experience of Turkish methods and Arab character. Plots of this kind are generally betrayed. There are so many undercurrents of conflicting interests, of friendship and enmity, of fear and greed, that when half-a-dozen people are aware of an intention with regard to some one else, the betting is odds on that one of the six will consider that he best serves his own interests by informing the object of the intention of its existence and nature. It is the fear of things like this that is in part responsible for the peculiar system of domestic espionage that is found in Turkey. I mean the way in which officials and even private individuals employ spies to find out what is being said about them, what their enemies are doing, and so forth. I used to think this a great waste of money, but now I am not so sure. We who live in civilized countries regard the idea of plotting deliberately to injure or destroy an enemy as something quite outside the common experience of life. We regard such cases

* I merely state what actually occurred, and cannot prove this without giving away my informants; therefore I have not referred to the incident in the course of official correspondence.

as pertaining solely to the criminal courts, and some people will argue that the lunatic asylum rather than the prison is the proper place for the people who do these things. They have not come to that yet in the East. A good man will not employ such methods, and regards with the utmost reprobation those who do ; but still the idea of using the assassin's dagger to avenge a private wrong, or remove an obstacle to success, is not to him unthinkable. The incident served to enlighten me as to the serious nature of my position, of which, despite constant warnings, I had been disposed to make light.

In order to learn the Sanaa dialect, which differs much from any with which I was then acquainted, I engaged a certain Sheikh Ahmad to go about with me. This man, though a schoolmaster, scribe,* and Imam of a mosque, was surprisingly ignorant of classical Arabic and most other things. He could not read a book I had brought with me, written by a compatriot of his own in the seventeenth century. He had never heard of the Wahabi movement. Concerning the geography of the rest of Arabia, the extent and progress of Islam, and other questions which it might have been supposed would have been in his line, he knew next to nothing ; while concerning other matters of more general interest, nothing at all. Nor was he in any way peculiar in this respect, for the other citizens of Sanaa with whom I found opportunity to converse were as bad or worse. It is most difficult to reconcile the decadent state of the present-day Arabs with their wonderful achievements in the past.

So far as Sanaa itself was concerned, I found Sheikh Ahmad an excellent guide. We visited together the points of principal interest and saw, I think, pretty well all there is to be seen. The town is divided into three parts : the old Arab town, which contains the residences of the principal Arabs, the shops, and the Government buildings ; Bir-el-Azab, a suburb lying adjacent to the west, which is the residential quarter ; and west of this again Kaa-el-Yahood, the Ghetto. The town wall has

* Still a common profession in the East, where the bulk of the population is illiterate. They write letters from dictation, and read them to the recipients.

been extended in modern times to include all three divisions, and at the present day has a perimeter of about twelve kilometres. The ancient wall, that is the one encircling old Sanaa, is a formidable work, built of clay bricks revetted with stone, some forty feet high in places, and of nearly that thickness at the base. To breach it effectively siege artillery would be required. It is surmounted by a parapet, loopholed for musketry, with towers at intervals. The whole work, however, is much out of repair—while as for the extension built by the Turks, you could almost kick it down in some places. There are eight gates in all. The citadel is on rising ground abutting on to the east end of the town. It covers a space of several acres, and is full of buildings. The walls are high and strong, and it would be an awkward place to carry by assault, though simply a shell trap if artillery could be brought to bear. The barracks, handsome stone-built buildings, are situated to the south of the town just outside the wall.

The houses of Sanaa are constructed, as to their lower stories, of blocks of a dark basaltic stone, the superstructure being of sun-baked brick, with façades of stucco and whitewash. The stones, accurately chiselled, are fitted together without mortar. The buildings have a noticeable tendency to taper to a point, and some of the taller houses are almost pyramidal in shape. The interiors are arranged, usually, in the long narrow rooms so dear to the Arabian architect. They are often luxuriously furnished according to Eastern ideas. The streets in the native town are narrow and sombre. The Government buildings constructed by the Turks after their second occupation are at the eastern extremity of the town, fronting the "Bakili" Mosque across a wide dusty space which serves as a parade ground for the troops quartered within the town wall. Externally they are rather imposing, and being built of this same black stone, which is quarried in the neighbourhood, they have a gloomy appearance in keeping with the general aspect of the city. The bazaars call for no special notice. There are no covered arcades. A watercourse running through the town is spanned by a bridge. It is dry most of the year, but comes down in spate now and again.

MANZONI'S MAP OF SANAA.

Manzoni, the Italian traveller, made several journeys to Sanaa in the years succeeding the second Turkish occupation. There have been no important additions to the city since his day.

In Bir-el-Azab the houses are more European in style and nearly all of them have gardens. Here reside the Vali and most of the senior officers. The European visitor to Sanaa is usually well advised to do the same, for the air is much purer here than in the insanitary Arab town.

The Jews are strictly segregated in their own quarter, "Kaa-el-Yahood," at the western extremity of the fortified area. The houses here are smaller and more closely packed together than in Sanaa, but the streets are nevertheless cleaner, and their general aspect betokens more industry and prosperity.

The buildings in Sanaa of the greatest architectural pretensions are of course the mosques. The principal Arab mosque, which was once a church, in the days when Christianity was the State religion, consists of a high wall with a colonnade on the inward side opening on to a square unroofed space, in the middle of which stands a small cubical building somewhat resembling the Kaaba at Mecca.* That it really was a church is attested by the Byzantine style of architecture, and niches in the external wall for the images that Moslem iconoclasm cannot tolerate. I was shown round this mosque by its Imam, who discoursed at length on its history, and was proud of the art treasures in his keeping. These consisted of works in stone and brass, a carved wooden doorway which, while knowing nothing whatever about these things, I should say was very fine, and several stones in the walls bearing Himyaritic inscriptions, which he promised to let me copy if I liked. I twice attended the Friday morning service in this mosque before I had, as related, to discontinue going there. The congregation were nearly all Zaidie Arabs, for Turks are discouraged. The service none the less includes the petition for the welfare of Mohammed V., "Commander of the Faithful," customary with the Sunna. The Zaidie mosques are peculiar in that singing, or what practically amounts to it, is tolerated; a practice no doubt derived from the old-time Christianity of the Yemen. After the evening prayer the worshippers remain in their places to intone a sort of rhymed prayer with a tuneful and rather melancholy cadence, which

* They call it "the lesser Kaaba."

lasts about a quarter of an hour. Except in this matter the Zaidies do not differ much in the ceremonies they practise from other Sheia sects.

There are many other large Arab mosques in Sanaa which contain objects of interest, but I was not able to visit them all, as many have fallen into desuetude and are only opened on special occasions. The lofty minarets of brick, decorated with white stucco, are very picturesque. The traveller notices that the pigeon replaces the usual crescent as weathercock. This is not emblematic of peace, as one might think, but to commemorate the part played by that bird in the miraculous preservation of Mohammed during his flight to Medina.

Very different in design is the Turkish mosque known as the Bakili, built during the first Turkish occupation, and restored when they retook the Yemen in 1872. This is an imitation of St. Sophia, and though fine enough externally, looks strangely out of keeping with its surroundings. The interior, though better kept, is tawdry in comparison with the Arab mosque, and rendered more so by the horrible practice of hanging coloured glass balls, ostrich eggs, and other preposterous objects from the roof—in which it must be admitted the Turks are by no means the only or even the worst offenders in the Near East. Those of my readers who have seen the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem will sympathize here. It looks like a cheap toy-shop.

Around the walls of Sanaa lie many scattered houses which, when isolated, are generally furnished with a keep, that is to say, a round tower something like a martello, in which the occupants may take refuge in case of attack. The village of Shaoob lies to the north of Sanaa, adjoining it, and extends to Raudha, the large town we had noticed on our arrival, which, however, I was not destined to visit. In and about Shaoob there are several large plantations of wattle trees, and a good deal of other cultivation.

Nearly all European fruits and flowers grow well in these fertile regions. During the time I spent there we had apples, apricots, figs, mulberries, and peaches for fruit; roses, violets, and many other flowers; and for vegetables, celery, spinach, and lettuce. Yet I was not there in the

best season, and left before the grapes, which are the pride of Sanaa, were ripe.

At this altitude * cereals are cultivated more than coffee and kat, which do better on the lower slopes. Wheat and barley, stunted in a manner that looks strange to the European, Indian corn, oats, and lucerne, are grown extensively.

The population of Sanaa at the present time is estimated, roughly, at 18,000 souls. It has become much reduced in the past few years, for which war and famine are responsible. Great mortality from starvation and diseases arising therefrom occurred among the poorer classes during the last siege. The town at present is much too large for the number of its inhabitants, and many houses are standing empty.

The townspeople fall into four principal classes : the military and Government officials, who are for the most part Moslem Turks, a *coterie* of Levantine merchants, Ottoman subjects, but Christians, Roman Catholic or Orthodox ; the Zaidie Arabs, and the Jews. Signor Caprotti, being the only foreign resident, forms a fifth class, all to himself.

The Arab community in Sanaa are for the most part well-to-do. There are many small merchants and shopkeepers, but the majority live on the income derived from the lands they own in the neighbourhood. They are the laziest people I have ever come across. Their morning is devoted to a stroll round Sanaa or out into the country, called the "daurah." They lunch about midday, and spend the rest of the day eating kat—the national vice.

Kat is a shrub grown extensively in the Yemen "middle veld," that is to say the country at an altitude of three to four thousand feet above sea level. Its consumption is almost universal among the inhabitants of this part of Arabia, though it is unknown elsewhere, so far as I am aware. The leaves, which somewhat resemble beech, are made into bundles on the plantations and sent all over the Yemen by special caravans ; for to be good it must be eaten fresh. It has a rather acrid taste of nothing in particular, and is said to have a mildly

* 7,200 feet approximately.

stimulating effect resembling that of strong tea. Personally I never succeeded in eating enough kat to produce any effect at all. Indeed the principal objection to its use, for it is said to be quite harmless, is the enormous amount of time it requires from its devotees. The Arabs themselves say it is ruining the race, for what with the "daurah" necessary to keep them in health, and the hours that must be spent in absorbing kat, there is no time left for business or study. Yet so fond of it are they, that they considered being deprived of it the greatest hardship of the siege. They do not consider kat-eating immoral: it ranks with tobacco and coffee as an allowable stimulant. Hashish-smoking and wine-drinking, though strictly forbidden in theory, are very common in towns, but the country people are abstemious in these respects.

Curiously enough the Yemen Arabs do not care for "coffee" made from the ground berries, and prefer an infusion of the husks which they call "Kishr" (the word means a husk or rind). These husks fetch a higher price than the berries. One has to acquire a taste for Kishr, which at first reminds one rather of hot barley water. It is refreshing, however, and an excellent thirst-quencher.

The dress of the Yemen Arabs is peculiar to themselves. The town-bred Arabs of Sanaa wear silk robes, girdled at the waist, large white turbans, and square-toed sandals. They nearly all carry a shoulder-cloth, which they are fond of wrapping round their heads in cold weather, and they seldom wear the jubbah. This costume, however, is supposed to denote an educated man, which, in their eyes, means one versed in the religious law, but in practice it is assumed by any one who can afford it. The dress of the countryman, the mountaineer, and the poorer class of townspeople is more striking and picturesque. It consists of a black turban fastened in a peculiar manner, a black shirt reaching to the knees, with sleeves as wide as the shirt itself, and over it in full dress a coloured loin-cloth and voluminous sash. These cloths are made in the Yemen and are very strong. The dye is indigo and is not fast: it is not supposed to be. They like it to smear off over their faces and hands, and this,

with their long black curls carefully oiled, gives them an appearance that is sometimes scarcely human.

The Turkish women are dressed in black and thickly veiled. The Yashmak of Cairo and Stamboul would not be considered a sufficient covering for decency in an Arabian town. The Arab women are wrapped in coloured cloths and likewise closely veiled in towns. In the country they go uncovered, and in some parts they wear trousers in shape not unlike that part of the male attire of Western Europe.

The weapon of the Yemen highlander is the jambeia, a short dagger with a broad curved blade which fits into a U-shaped sheath worn at the waist under the sash. The handle is generally of horn ornamented with silver, and the whole, including the blade, is made locally. No person of the male sex, over three years of age, likes to be seen abroad without his jambeia : it is considered most effeminate. It is amusing to see quite small children, half naked, wearing these formidable knives. The Arabs are very expert in their use. They hold them point downwards and curve inwards, not in the Italian manner, and in attacking aim for the supra-sternal knotch a blow which, if rightly placed, splits open the whole chest-wall, and is instantly fatal. There is another kind known as the Sabeekeh, which is worn crossways, and is nearly as long as a sword bayonet. I wanted to buy one of these, but the man who sold them told me candidly that they were only suitable for heavy, powerful men, and that for undersized people like myself, the shorter weapon was preferable.

Mention has been made of the extreme ignorance of the Sanaa Arabs. The depth of it may be gauged by the fact that there is no bookshop in the town. They don't read books, they say, because they have not the time. You can't both read and eat kat with any enjoyment of either occupation, so it seems. Practically the only books obtainable are in manuscript, which even the natives have difficulty in deciphering.

The Arabs of the Yemen in Arabic literature have a reputation for ugliness which I think is unjustified. Though darker in colour, as a rule, than the true Bedou, they are noticeably free from the taint of negro blood

so common on the coast. It is not too much to say that the Persian and Abyssinian strains, grafted on the original Semitic stock, has produced, in this splendid climate, a race that need fear comparison with none in point of physique.

In character they are brave and patriotic, long-suffering in adversity, and steadfast to a cause : but slothful, untrustworthy, hypocritical, and vicious. The true Arab with all his defects of greed and cruelty has virtues which have always been the object of admiration. His word once passed is to him the most sacred of obligations. He will fight to the last rather than surrender the fugitive who has taken refuge with him. Not so, however, the Arab of the Yemen, with whom, not infrequently, honour is held of small account in comparison with gain or personal advancement.

The Christian merchants of Sanaa are a respectable, well-to-do class, not remarkable for energy or enterprise. As Signor Caprotti says of them, they use up all their available ingenuity in discovering Saints' Days and other excuses for shutting up shop and going out for the day. They trade almost entirely with the Turks, for articles of Western manufacture are not wanted by the Arabs. In their shops such things as European clothes, Huntley and Palmer's biscuits, and sardines are procurable.

Perhaps the most interesting of all are the Jews, who seem to be the only people to do any real work. Were they to go on strike, life in Sanaa would become impossible. This, however, is not likely to happen, or at any rate it would be a very sad thing for the Jews if it did. In their hands are the sanitary arrangements (such as they are), the building and repair of buildings, practically all the artisan work, and certain other duties which require some more particular elucidation. When the Turks occupied the country for the second time it became necessary, in order to come to terms with the Arab leaders, to proclaim the supremacy of the Moslem law throughout the land : for the latter, however much they may evade it in practice, hold that the *Sheria* is the only code to which a Moslem can properly submit. This involved certain inconvenient consequences, among them

the prohibition of the manufacture, importation, or sale of intoxicating liquor. Over thirty different varieties of grapes grow in the Sanaa Valley, from which a very drinkable claret * and a spirit called Arki or Mastic are expressed. Now, since the Jews are all going to hell anyway, there is surely no reason why they should not be as useful as possible to us on the way there : and on this principle it has been decided to leave the traffic in liquor and certain other " commodities " entirely in their hands. This simple arrangement satisfies all parties, particularly the Jews. The idea is by no means new : it has obtained in Islamic countries since the time of Mouawiyah. There is a story that the King of Rum † once sent an ambassador to the court of the Caliph. This diplomat, who was something of an Orientalist, was much interested in all he saw, and especially struck by the fact that the Moslems, while very strict in some of their religious observances, were very lax in others. " Why is it," he asked the Caliph in audience one day, " that you Moslems drink wine, but refuse pork, when both are forbidden by your book ? " The Caliph referred him to certain learned doctors present, who propounded theories, various and ingenious, based on differing interpretations of those texts in the Koran bearing on the subject. " Very interesting indeed," said the ambassador when the last had finished, " but I think I know a better answer still : you like wine and you don't like pork." At which the Caliph stroked his beard reflectively, the learned doctors frowned, and the rest of the company tittered.

In spite of the constitution the Jews of Sanaa are subject to certain disabilities. They are distinguished from their masters, the Arabs, by their dress—an ungirded tunic of print or cotton reaching to the knees—by their close-fitting skull-caps, and the absence of weapons. They dress their hair in a peculiar manner, in plaits hanging down on each cheek. They are not allowed to ride in the town, and even outside they must dismount when passing a Moslem. Withal, however, it would be unfair to describe them as an oppressed

* The Consul says it is the most filthy stuff he ever tasted.

† *I.e.* the Emperor of Byzantium.

community. The law is administered fairly with regard to them, and they are on the whole prosperous and contented. The side having the upper hand in Sanaa for the time being, whether Arab or Turk, finds that it pays to conciliate them. They are not interfered with in their religious practices, in which matter they are far more strict than either the Moslems or Christians. Nothing will induce them to do business on the Sabbath or during any of their numerous fasts and festivals ; and this fact is fully realized by their employers, who put up with the inconvenience occasioned thereby without much grumbling.

The Ghetto is a very interesting place. Crouched in the dingy hovels which serve for shops, one sees types that reproduce exactly what one has pictured to one's self in reading about historical events where Jews have played a part. It is curious that it should so seldom seem to occur to the painter of Biblical subjects that the characters he depicts ought to look like Jews and not like Germans.

Taken as a whole, the people of Sanaa are remarkably peaceful and law-abiding—perhaps because they all go armed. Serious crimes of violence are rare. The same must be said of the soldiers, who, with the exception of the Albanian regiments that came in after the siege, were as a rule quiet and well behaved. Despite their rapacity the inhabitants compare favourably with other Orientals in the matter of commercial integrity. This may be due in part to the absence of opportunity for cheating : for it must be remembered that practically no visitors come to Sanaa. There are no tourists to create, by their ignorance of the language and customs, those classes of dragomen, curio manufacturers, pimps, and other rogues that infest the more travelled parts of the East, preying on the simplicity of the visitor and demoralizing the native population, only too ready as a rule to earn money in any way that does not involve manual labour.

The climate of Sanaa is cool and pleasant all the year round. The rainy season is the autumn. The nights are very cold in winter, but the days are warm. In summer the heat, though considerable, is not oppressive,

owing to the dryness of the air. In the month of May I sometimes obtained a difference of more than twenty degrees between the wet and dry bulb thermometer readings. The only rain that fell during the first three months I spent there was brought on in showers by the heavy artillery fire at times during the siege. Otherwise the sky was cloudless and the air calm.

In spite of the excellent climate, Sanaa is an unhealthy city. Typhus fever and malaria are prevalent, though the latter is probably contracted on the way up in most cases. Both Ahmad and I suffered from tertian ague for some time after our arrival. Prolonged residence seems liable to induce a form of anæmia which is cured by a change.

The water-supply is plentiful and good. A perennial stream runs through the valley, and there are many wells both within and without the walls. The purest source is a spring on the lower slopes of the "Gebel Nugoom," to which it is well worth while to send for drinking water if possible.

CHAPTER XIII

THE SIEGE OF SANAA

In the early days of January 1911 events took place which left no room for further doubts as to the actual imminence of an insurrection. There was a sudden recrudescence of the firing by night which had been going on for some time past at intervals, and which is supposed to mean that the Imam is about to make another effort to drive out the Turks. It was rumoured that the Imam himself was advancing from the north at the head of a large army.

On January 8 his advance guard reached Raudha: and that night parties of the Arab sharpshooters occupied the houses in Shaoob and sniped the walls. They were driven out the following day by a strong force sent against them which then bombarded Raudha, but was forced to retire after sustaining some loss.

On January 12 an attempt was made to bring in the mail, which had reached Senam Pasha, but was unable to proceed farther. A considerable force, with artillery and machine guns, advanced from the Hodeidah gate and was soon hotly engaged. The Arabs charged fiercely, but were repulsed with heavy loss by the fire of the Turkish machine guns. The fighting lasted till sundown, when the Ottoman troops beat a retreat, having failed to capture the ridge overlooking the town from the west, which was presumably their object. The Arabs, however, suffered severely in the engagement. Four important chieftains and over a thousand of their followers were reported to have fallen. Great flocks of vultures could be seen circling above the battlefield for many days after. The Turkish casualties were by comparison inconsiderable.

That evening a state of siege was proclaimed in Sanaa.

The gates were closed ; no one on pain of death was to attempt to enter or leave the town, and after sundown citizens were to remain in their houses.

The military situation at this date was briefly as follows : Mohammed Ali Pasha, the Turkish Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief, had at his disposal an army of about 40,000 troops which was employed in garrisoning the more important towns, in holding the blockhouses on the Hodeidah road, and in various small detached posts scattered about the country. No striking force large enough to bring the Imam to battle was available anywhere in the Yemen. These dispositions, unsound as they may appear strategically, were none the less deliberate, and the outcome of a settled policy. In the event of a revolt the force at hand would be sufficient to cope with the situation, and therefore, as an army would have to be sent from Europe in any case, the best thing to do, it was considered, was to hold on to as much as possible, allow the Arabs to wear themselves out in besieging the fortified towns and other posts, and wait for the reinforcements before assuming the offensive. The Turkish commander, in my own opinion, is less open to criticism for his general plan of campaign than for the manner in which it was carried out. He held far too many detached posts, with garrisons of half a company or so, and neglected to provision them properly. He committed the supreme tactical error of employing single guns for the defence of isolated positions, and he further failed to provide for the withdrawal of the troops holding the blockhouse line, and those stationed in other places where, when hostilities became imminent, they were no longer required. As the direct result of these faulty dispositions a large number of prisoners and several pieces of artillery fell into the enemy's hands at the outset of the rebellion, which not only served to encourage the rebels, but prevented, from fear of reprisals, any severe measures being adopted against them when the Turks once more gained the upper hand.

In Sanaa itself we had, I believe, six regiments of regular infantry, about one thousand Arab irregulars, four four-gun batteries of field artillery, four mortars,

six machine guns, and a squadron of cavalry. Besides these there were six guns in the citadel, and about a dozen more over the gates and in position on the wall. The fortress on the summit of Gebel Nugoom was held by a battalion with several guns. Mohammed Ali Pasha commanded in person.

It is not possible to do more than guess at the numbers at the disposition of the Imam Yahya. In all probability not less than 150,000 riflemen took the field on this occasion. His artillery, consisting of some seventy odd pieces, of varying calibre, but all more or less modern and quite serviceable, was at Shaharah, but it was doubtful from the first whether he could avail himself of it, principally for lack of gunners. Shaharah is the Imam's stronghold. It lies several days' journey to the north of Sanaa, and has never been visited, so far as we know, by any European, or by any Turk except as a prisoner or deserter. It is said to consist of two flat-topped mountains connected by a natural bridge, the plateau being fertile and well watered. The Arabs consider this place to be impregnable, but I take leave to doubt if it be really as formidable as they think. Most probably it will turn out to be more imposing than defensible, like most so-called "native strongholds." Simultaneously with Sanaa all the other Turkish garrisons in the Yemen highlands were invested.

Both sides issued extravagant proclamations: the Imam that he would not sheathe his sword till the last Turk had been driven into the sea; the Turkish commander that he would not retreat one step, and that the Yemen question should be settled this time once and for all.

The Ottoman Government had to face a most difficult and dangerous situation, for besides this formidable revolt of the Zaidie tribes led by the Imam, another rebellion had broken out in Tehama and the Asir country, which might at any moment assume dangerous proportions. This latter movement owed its inception to causes entirely different from those responsible for the Zaidie rising. A certain Seyyid Idrees,* a Magribi by race, for some years past had been preaching a revival which had

* Commonly called "the Idreesie."

lately developed into an anti-Ottoman movement among the Sunna tribes of the coast belt. His propaganda had attained so large a measure of success that the Turks, after fruitless endeavours to come to terms with him, had been forced to declare war. In consequence, Abha, the capital of the Asir Sandjak, was besieged by the Idreesie's followers, and the coast towns were threatened. There was even some talk of the Idreesie attacking Hodeidah. Though they were seeking a common end, an alliance between the two rebellious parties was improbable, owing to their religious differences; but the fact of these hostile tribes being on the flank was in itself enough to hamper seriously the movements of the relieving army.

In these difficult circumstances the measures adopted by the Porte were probably the best that could have been devised. A force of about 40,000 men under General Izzet Pasha was despatched to Hodeidah, the Hedjaz garrison was reinforced, and the Sharee of Mecca was induced to undertake the invasion of Asir and the relief of Abha, with an army of Bedou Arabs raised locally, to which Turkish regulars and artillery were added as a stiffening. This, it was hoped, would keep the Idreesie quiet while the Imam was being crushed, and would further minimize the risk of trouble in the Hedjaz declaring itself on top of the other complications—for so long as the tribesmen are fighting somebody, they do not very much care who it may happen to be. It was obvious however that some months must elapse before Sanaa could be relieved—a necessary preliminary to any decisive action.

The Imam probably considered that his best chance of success lay in capturing Sanaa before troops could arrive from Europe to the rescue. A successful assault on the town would immensely enhance his own prestige, while proportionately demoralizing the Turks. He is said to have urged this course on his followers during the early days of the siege, but without success: the reason for this we shall see later.

The first event of importance that took place after the investment had begun was the defection of the "Millah." The "Millah" were the irregular Arab troops raised

by the Turks at the time when the enthusiasm for "constitutional" methods was at its height. They were armed and fed, highly paid, and well clothed by the Government. At first they were dressed in khaki, like the regular soldiers, but as they objected to this a uniform was devised for them more nearly corresponding to their ordinary attire, in which, with their natural aptitude for drill as for everything connected with the soldier's trade, they looked on parade a very smart body of men. We ourselves were responsible, indirectly, for this curious experiment and its unfortunate result. It was our remarkable success with Egyptian troops led by British officers in the Sudan campaign that caused it to be made. With a misapprehension of the relative conditions that is almost pathetic, the Turks argued that with better material to work upon they ought to be even more successful than we were, and it does not seem to have occurred to any one that however wise it might be on occasion to utilize the military resources of Arabia in foreign wars, it is not advisable to employ locally raised troops against their own people.

The Imam offered seventy dollars for every head of a "Millie" brought to him, and in consequence about five hundred of them deserted from Sanaa in a body on January 16, while the remainder were seized and imprisoned only just in time to frustrate a plot to blow up their barracks. The gendarmerie, however, remained loyal for the most part. This corps also had been raised locally, but long before the "Millah." The men were of a superior class, and more carefully selected from among those likely to prove faithful. At any rate in their case the policy of the Turks was justified by results, for, in spite of individual desertions, they proved very useful.

The authorities, now thoroughly alarmed for the safety of the town, proceeded to imprison most of the principal Arab citizens, including every one who was known to have had anything to do with the writer, and took all precautions to prevent a sudden rising from within coinciding with the attack from without which was generally anticipated.

Nothing more of importance happened for several

days. The Arabs maintained a constant rifle-fire on the town both day and night, to which the besieged replied with their artillery and musketry from the wall. There was a great deal of noise and very little result. The Turks, as a measure of defence, had sown the ground without the walls with *fougasses* or land mines. These nasty, dangerous contrivances consist in a shell buried in the ground with the ordinary fuse removed, and a friction arrangement substituted, so contrived that the shell explodes when any one treads on it. The use of these infernal machines is confined in regular warfare to cases where it is necessary to protect some particularly vulnerable spot, for unless put down in enormous numbers they are evidently useless on an extended line of defence. They have, however, a certain moral effect not easy to account for, from which the most civilized troops are not exempt. The failure of the first assault on the Redan is said to have been due to fear of the work being mined, and the terror they inspired certainly contributed towards preventing the Arabs storming Sanaa. Most unfortunately the officer charged with their laying suffered from a short memory, and having moreover taken to drink during the siege, was unable at the end of it to recollect where he had put them. He became the most unpopular man in Sanaa.

Towards the end of January the Arabs received large reinforcements, as was shown by a sudden great increase in the number of camp fires visible by night around the town. On the 29th, 30th, and 31st the fighting was continuous: the Arabs attacked from Shaoob, where they found good cover among the trees and buildings; but though several casualties occurred among the soldiers defending the wall at this point, their attack was easily repulsed. News reached us on February 1 that the Turkish fortified posts at Asr (the ridge from which we had obtained our first view of Sanaa) had been taken, and with them three guns. The fall of Matinah was rumoured persistently. The Imam himself, we heard, was now in command and had determined to assault immediately: scaling ladders were being hastily prepared, and the Arab artillery was about to be brought into action.

There is little doubt that, had a determined assault been made, it would have been successful at comparatively small cost to the attacking force. The extent of the Turkish line of defence was far too great for the number of troops available to hold it. In fact it seems probable that the Turkish commander had resigned himself to the loss of the town itself, and was proposing to hold out in the citadel till relief came. At the most critical time troops were withdrawn from Sanaa to reinforce the garrison of the fortress on Gebel Nugoom. So long as these two points remained in Turkish hands it mattered little by comparison what happened to the rest of Sanaa.

The Arab leaders, with whom in military matters, at any rate, the authority of the Imam is of little weight, were not of one mind. There is a curious superstition that Sanaa enjoys Divine protection, and though the city may be starved into surrender any attempt to take it by storm is foredoomed to failure. The astrologers declared that the season was unfavourable, and the matter ended in the opportunity slipping away before the Arabs had made up their minds to take advantage of it. Mohammed Ali Pasha himself explained this supineness by the fact that the highland Arabs, though brave in the open and stubborn in defence, dislike attacking fortifications, and by their fear of the Turkish land mines.

Perhaps the Arabs thought that as they had succeeded before in starving out the garrison, so they would succeed on this occasion. The Turks, however, had learned their lesson. They had in store, so it was said, enough food to keep the troops on full rations for two years, and a supply of ammunition larger than could conceivably be wanted.

The neglect of the rebels to employ their artillery is more easily explicable. For one thing, though they had among them a few men, deserters from the Turks, capable of working guns after a fashion, there was no one in the Arab army who properly understood their use. No one could be found to set the fuses, with the result that out of the seven hundred shells that they fired into Senam Pasha, not a single one burst. The Imam would be the last to wish damage to the city itself, of which, like all

Yemen Arabs, he is inordinately proud. The victims of a bombardment would have been for the most part Arab sympathizers. The citadel was full of Arab prisoners, several near relations of the Imam among them. The barracks without the wall provided a suitable target, it is true, but the country on this side is quite open, without a trace of cover for several miles, and no artillery position exists within what the Arabs consider a practicable range. So strongly built are these barracks that some shells which struck them when Ahmad Feizi Pasha was retaking Sanaa burst without penetrating the walls.

The fighting therefore continued through February and March in the desultory manner described. The expenditure of ammunition on both sides was enormous. It may well be asked where all the rifles and ammunition in the possession of the Arabs come from. Many people, remembering all the precautions taken to prevent gun-running into Arabia, suppose that they are more or less unarmed, or at most in possession only of obsolete muzzle-loading weapons. This is by no means the case. So far as the Western borderlands are concerned it can safely be said that any Arab capable of bearing arms who does not possess a modern rifle is the exception that proves the rule. Rifles and ammunition can be bought in this part of Arabia more cheaply than in Europe. Great quantities have been captured from the Turks at different times ; ammunition is sold by the soldiers to agents, who carry on this nefarious business behind the backs of the authorities, who, while aware of what goes on, find it very difficult to put a stop to the traffic. Rifles in large numbers find their way into the country from Syria. I have no doubt that large fortunes are made over it. It is noticeable that the rifles used by the Arabs both here and in the Hedjaz are of the same pattern (the '74 Mauser) as that still used extensively in the Turkish army.*

Personally, I cannot see why the Arabs should not be allowed to arm. The French firms that trade

* All the troops garrisoning Sanaa were armed with it. It is a single loader of about ·400 bore, firing black powder, sighted to 1,200 metres. Izzet Pasha's force had the ·275 Mauser, the weapon used by the Boers in the Transvaal war.

with Oman have, to my mind, as good justification for importing arms into Arabia as Elswick & Co. have for selling Dreadnoughts to Brazil; and similarly, I consider that the Zaidie Imam is as much within his right in declaring war on Turkey, if he wants to, as the King of Italy. That, however, is neither here nor there.

During the first two months of the siege no one, not even the poorer classes, suffered from it any hardship more severe than the deprivation of kat. Provisions at first were but very little dearer than in peace time. Fresh meat, milk, butter, vegetables, and other luxuries, though expensive, were obtainable by such as could afford them right up to the end. The gardens of Bir-el-Azab within the wall are very productive. Late in the siege the supply of fuel ran out, and many of the townspeople suffered much from lack of it. Such things as lamp-oil, cigarettes, and tobacco became unprocurable except at extravagant prices. The authorities wisely seized for the use of the troops an ample supply of every necessary that seemed likely to become scarce, so that the soldiers, though much overworked owing to their insufficient numbers, did not otherwise fare badly. This action greatly distressed the Jews, who, foreseeing the course of events, had cornered the supply of oil, among other things, and refused to sell any except at an enormous profit. Mohammed Ali, however, shares Mr. Taft's views regarding these combinations in restraint of trade, and after the leaders of the Jewish community had had a short interview with him, the oil was forthcoming at a reasonable price. They got even with the Turks by putting up the price of "mastic," to which, as the stuff is not supposed to be sold at all, it was difficult to object.

A question concerning the currency led to trouble in the following manner. The Arabs, for some reason, have a weakness for the Maria Tereza dollar, a very clumsy silver coin larger than a crown, and worth less than two shillings. This, with the Turkish piastre, forms the silver currency of the country, for the Arabs, except in towns, will not accept the Magidie. The relative value in piastres of the Reale (dollar) and the Magidie afforded therefore a convenient method of gauging the state of

A view in Sanaa.

public opinion with regard to the probable outcome of the campaign, for in the event of the Turks being worsted the latter would become almost valueless. On the day that the Asr forts were lost, the number of piastres held equivalent to a reale, normally ten or eleven, rose to nineteen, while the value of the Magidie depreciated correspondingly. This did not suit the authorities at all, and they proceeded to lay hands on all the Reales they could find, thus forcing the Arabs to use Turkish money. Any one who refused the Magidie, or would accept it only at a discount, was liable to be flogged. A more hopeless muddle than the present condition of the Turkish currency would be difficult to conceive. It is different wherever one goes, and the value of the principal coins fluctuates daily. There are about a dozen different coins in common use, none of which is exactly divisible into a whole number of the next smallest. I have never yet succeeded in changing a Turkish pound without an argument about it.

. . . . .

I must turn now from the history of the campaign to the less interesting story of my own adventures: for the reader will have surmised that the attitude of benevolent aloofness concerning my doings, assumed at first by the authorities, did not survive the actual outbreak of hostilities. Given the frame of mind which I have tried to describe in the preceding pages, the belief that I was an agent of the British Government charged with the manipulation of some plot against the Ottoman supremacy, and given the real danger of an outbreak in Sanaa, that would have been too much to expect. Beside the general belief that they spend their time in Downing Street in working out schemes to grab the Yemen, the Turks charge us on certain more specific indictments. They complain that in the year 1909 we did, of set design and malice aforethought, supply to the Imam Yahya two Maxim guns and a minting machine. If this be so, it can only be said that the British Government must have got the best of the bargain for once in a way, for the machine in question turns out the worst money ever seen.

Up to the time of the siege I was not interfered with openly. A couple of policemen, badly disguised as Arabs

of the town, were set to watch my movements, and there was, of course, the incident that led to my ceasing to visit the great mosque, but these things caused me no actual inconvenience. Thanks to a warning given me in good time by Signor Caprotti, I was enabled to lay in a good stock of firewood, oil, and other necessaries before the blockade began. My principal anxiety was that my luggage should arrive first, for I had brought nothing with me, and was still dressed in Arab clothes. Once in possession of my instruments, books, and so on, I should not care, I thought, how long the siege might last, for there were plenty of opportunities for doing useful work in Sanaa itself. I had arranged that my things should be sent after me as soon as a telegram had announced my safe arrival. I imagined—wrongly, as it turned out—that they were with the mail that was driven back on Senam Pasha.

A few days after the state of siege was declared, two policemen arrived with a request that I would wait on the Mudir of police at his office in the Government buildings. Thither I went, to be received politely by that functionary, and informed through the medium of his subordinate, the Mufattish (inspector), for the Mudir himself spoke only Turkish, that the Vali had ordered certain measures to be adopted towards me. A plot to assassinate me had been discovered (very true, I thought), and it would be necessary for the future to place sentries at the doors of my house, and to detail two military policemen to accompany me wherever I went. Furthermore, any visitors I might wish to receive must first be approved by the Mudir.

All this was very annoying, but left me with nothing to say. The telegraph line was cut by the rebels, and the only communication with Hodeidah was by heliograph, which was in the hands of the military. War is war, and the Turks were most certainly justified in taking any measures they might deem necessary for the safety of the town. Accordingly I thanked the Mudir for this extreme, almost excessive, consideration for my safety, and retired.

The two military policemen who were to take charge of me accompanied me home, and the sentries, two in

number, were posted immediately in positions where they commanded every possible means of egress. One of the policemen was an enormously tall Turk, a sergeant in an infantry regiment, the other an Arab, one of the Millah, who was still trusted by the Government, partly no doubt because he had a family in Sanaa, on whom vengeance could be taken if he played false. As I did not wish to live under the constant observation of these "guardians," who were meant evidently to spy on my actions, on consideration I decided to dismiss temporarily "the Napani," whom I did not trust, to make the cook sleep at his own home, put the policemen in the furnished room over the porch, and occupy the rest of the building myself. Thus the police and I were practically in separate houses, for to get to my part of the establishment they had to cross the courtyard and knock at my front door, which I sometimes kept locked. To this arrangement, while it defeated the purpose of the authorities, it was very difficult to find objections: they considered that I had "euchred" them, and were more than ever convinced that some nefarious design was in process of maturing.

Some days later I visited Signor Caprotti for the last time for many weeks. Though we conversed in French, he was cautious in case the sergeant, who insisted on accompanying me, might understand that language better than he pretended. He told me, however, that he himself had fallen under suspicion in consequence of his dealings with me, which, in view of all he had done for the Turks in the past, he resented bitterly. It was his opinion that the town would be stormed in the course of the next few days, and that we were both of us in a very dangerous situation, from which extreme prudence alone was likely to extricate us safely.

We decided not to visit each other again till things looked brighter.

The arrest and imprisonment of most of our Arab acquaintances followed: even the "broker" who had been engaged in furnishing my house did not escape. Caprotti with much trouble succeeded in procuring the release of one or two of his business friends who had

been interned for no other reason than their connection with him, and in the case of Sheikh Ahmad, my tutor, I myself also felt bound to make a protest. I had asked, as a special favour, that he might be allowed to come to the house, and on a request being made, had sent him to the Hukumeh (Government offices). The next thing I heard about him was that he was in prison. I wrote, therefore, to the Mufattish, explaining, very carefully, the circumstances in which I had come to know him, while pointing out that it was difficult to avoid the conclusion that his connection with me was responsible for his arrest, as he was known to be well affected toward the Ottoman Government. I was very anxious to get him off, for he had a wife and family dependent on him, whom I myself, being absolutely penniless, could do little to assist. Throughout the siege I was myself dependent entirely on the generosity of Signor Caprotti, for my own money had not arrived before it began.

The formidable-looking official envelope in which the answer to this communication arrived proved to contain the following cryptogram :

"Monsieur,

"Je vous remerci qui nous envoyez Ahmad Igradi chez moi. Il est maintenent a prison parce-qui il estait suiveux par le police.

"Il est un très mauvee et un autre aussi qui suiv petetre qui il est aussi prisoné aujourdhui mon chèrie !

"Djamil."

I perceived that I was dealing with a Young Turk.

It was quite plain that the only thing to do was to make the best of an unpleasant situation. I used to go out daily with my guardians for a couple of hours' exercise, but so conscious was I that every word I said to them was duly reported to the Mudir, that these walks were more trying than enjoyable. For the rest of the day I found time hang heavily on my hands. I had no more visitors, for the few friends of mine who were not in prison had been warned not to come to the house. Nor did I dare visit any one else for fear of getting them

into trouble. No printed books were procurable, and the Sanaa manuscript is too difficult to decipher for the reading of it to be any recreation.

About the time of the capture by the Arabs of the Asir posts, I was betrayed into an indiscretion in the following manner. Hussein, the "Millie" sergeant detailed to look after me, was in the habit of telling me rumours that circulated in the town regarding events outside. One day he told me that it was certain, at last, that Senam Pasha had capitulated. I was more particularly interested in the fate of the place because I believed that the whole of my baggage and money was there. As I had heard this particular report at least five times previously, and it had always been contradicted the next day, I did not attach much importance to what the sergeant said, and remarked wearily and sarcastically, "Yes, I daresay, and Constantinople has been taken by the French." This admittedly very feeble joke cost me dear. Off went both "guardians" to the Mudir, and that afternoon I was informed that the Vali had ordered that for the future neither Ahmad nor I was to leave the house.

Thereupon I wrote to the Vali requesting an explanation, and the instant removal of this restriction, and likewise of the guard over me, which I no longer required.

By way of an answer I received a visit from the Mudir—not the Mufattish (mon chéri). He explained that the two sergeants had quite misunderstood their instructions, and that he had decided to substitute for them one Hamdi Effendi, his interpreter on this occasion, a tall Turkish gentleman who spoke Arabic fluently. To this of course I could make no objection, but in order to forestall any possible accusation, I myself told him of "the capture of Constantinople" and the circumstances in which I had been led to make the remark. The Mudir professed not to have heard of this, laughed heartily, and assured me that nothing was farther from his mind than to suspect me of anything. Anxiety for my safety, and that alone, was dictating the action of the authorities in this matter. We parted on excellent terms. Long afterwards, in Hodeidah, when the British Consul asked the Vali on what he based his charge against

me of having had "suspicious dealings with natives," this incident was the only thing he quoted.

Hamdi Effendi accordingly replaced the two sergeants, who went off much pleased at being relieved of a dangerous duty, for they knew that if anything went wrong they would be held responsible. Hussein's head it appeared was feeling rather shaky on his shoulders as it was, for, being a "Millie," he would certainly be put to death in the event of the rebels taking Sanaa, which, in common with every one at that time, he considered only too probable. He actually had the nerve to ask me if he might take refuge in my house if the attack were successful and pass himself off as one of my servants, to which impudent proposition I thought it well to agree, conditionally.

Hamdi Effendi, who belonged to the corps of civil police, had been acting as secretary and interpreter to the Mudir. He was well educated, for a Turk, and therefore at first I found him a change distinctly for the better. The foregoing incident had however accentuated the suspicion with which I was regarded, and the surveillance thenceforward was stricter than ever. Another policeman was told off to accompany Ahmad whenever he went out, and yet another to sit all day in the kitchen. Things eventually came to a climax over the question of the house. On one thing I was absolutely determined, and prepared to fight about if necessary, and that was not to allow the police in my part of the house except by invitation. Nothing gets on the nerves more than being perpetually spied upon, and I was resolved at any rate to eat and sleep in peace. The flat roof of my house commanded a good view of the city and defences, and having nothing better to do I would sit there for hours at a stretch watching the fighting and talking with Ahmad, secure from being overheard, and running no more risk of being shot than we did downstairs. This arrangement however did not suit the police, who came to believe that I used the roof for the purpose of signalling to the enemy. One evening Hamdi turned up with two more policemen, one of whom was to sleep, he said, in Ahmad's room on the top floor, while the other would occupy the roof. I told them, simply, that I would not have it, and showed

them to the front door without further discussion. They had their own room, I reminded them, and must sleep there or go away altogether: an Englishman's house was his castle.

I had studied the capitulations before setting out, and knew well that this procedure on their part was unjustified unless they were prepared to frame against me some definite charge of treason.

About midnight I heard the front door open and some one ascend the staircase with stealthy movement. After waiting a minute or two, I went quietly upstairs myself, and came upon the intruder, one of the policemen, in Ahmad's room. The latter, acting on instructions from me, had said nothing, and was sitting up in bed waiting events. The policeman did not stay to discuss the matter: he was out of the house in the time allotted —ten seconds—with the happy result that the part played by Messrs. Smith & Wesson in the proceedings was confined to a mere demonstration.

Much amused, we followed him downstairs at a more leisurely pace, "banged, barred, and bolted" the front door behind him, and sat up playing cards for the rest of what I quite expected would be our last night of even qualified freedom. About two a.m. some policemen came into the courtyard and tried to force the door, but our barricade held fast, and they retired after a few ineffectual efforts. When morning came all of them with the exception of the sentries had disappeared.

The aggressive is often the wisest course, and I decided to begin the inevitable row myself. I sent to the Mudir that morning a communication "of so exceedingly stiff a nature"—I acknowledge my indebtedness—that it could hardly fail to produce some decisive result. In the strongest terms I protested against this burglarious intrusion at dead of night, reminding him that he would have to account later on to the British representative for what had happened. I suggested a "perquisition" in my house, and invited any examination the authorities might consider adequate to allay their suspicions.

This letter had the desired effect, though it failed to elicit a reply. All the police were withdrawn except

Hamdi Effendi. Ahmad was no longer accompanied, and, much to my relief, the man disappeared from the kitchen. I had been unable to object to his presence there, as it was outside the house, but I did not enjoy my food till he left. I had been warned about this, and in fact had lived for some time on hard-boiled eggs. It is not by any means impossible to poison a boiled egg, but to do it properly requires more ingenuity than the ordinary Turkish policeman possesses.

I had no further trouble with the authorities during the siege. The sentries remained guarding the doors of my house, and when I wanted to go out I had to send for Hamdi Effendi. There was however nothing for it but to submit to these inconveniences till communication with the outside world should be restored.

CHAPTER XIV

THE RELIEF

The Ottoman Government displayed great energy in despatching from Europe the force necessary to save the province. Taking into account the delay caused by the inevitable and ineffective quarantine and the difficulty experienced in procuring transport animals in adequate numbers, it speaks well for the ability of the staff that the relieving army should have been completely equipped and ready to march from the coast six weeks after the outbreak of the revolt.

The main body of the rebel army besieging Sanaa drew off about the middle of February to encounter Izzet Pasha's force, which, it was reported, was even then advancing from Hodeidah. Sufficient only remained to hold the garrison in check, and it became evident that all fear of an assault was over for the time being at any rate. Unless Izzet Pasha suffered a reverse, an early relief was to be anticipated.

This prospect was hailed with satisfaction by many people, but none more so than myself. So long as there was a chance of the place being taken by storm it was to my interest that the siege should continue, for that eventuality, assuming that I came to no harm in the fighting, would have suited my plans better than anything else that could possibly have happened. The chance gone by, the sooner the siege came to an end the better for me. I have never been so bored in my life as I was during February and March 1911. Except for my daily outing with Hamdi Effendi, I had no one to talk to except Ahmad, and nothing to read but an Arabic book called "The Scent of the Yemen," and some back numbers of "L'Illustration" kindly sent me by Signor

Caprotti. No chessmen were procurable, but I got some cards and tried to teach Ahmad piquet. He played so badly, however, perpetually revoking and declaring things he had not got, that we gave it up and took to draw poker, with matches for chips at two piastres a hundred. At this game he proved himself much more adept, besides having the luck of Iblis himself. It was a good thing for me that we were not playing for higher points. I once dealt him a straight flush, cold, to the knave of diamonds; but I have given up telling people about this remarkable occurrence because my faith in human nature was badly shaken by my doing so on the way home to England. We were just leaving Naples, and as many of the passengers had disembarked there, the tables had been rearranged, and I found myself next at dinner to a gentleman with whom I was only slightly acquainted. The conversation turning on card games, I related to him this very interesting experience. "I have only seen two straight flushes dealt cold in my life," said he; "that was at Johannesburg just before the war. Strange to say both were in the same deal." I gasped, and remarked that it must have been a very expensive game for one of the players. "Indeed it was," said he, "and very expensive for me too; I held four aces."

In such conditions one might almost be excused for taking to drink. There was no fear of our doing that, for the reason that it was very difficult to get hold of any, owing to the sentries. For about a month I went without any at all; then we contrived to make friends with some of the sentries, and got in some red wine and mastic, which Suleiman the cook bought from a Jew. We did take to hashish-smoking on one occasion in the following manner. While at lunch one day I was discussing with Ahmad the use of that drug in the East from various standpoints, therapeutical, physiological, and religious, when an important discrepancy appeared between the account given of its properties in the "Materia Medica" and the experience of a friend of Ahmad's who had been addicted to it for the last thirty years. I could not believe that the "Materia Medica" was wrong, but there was open to us the most simple and scientific of

Ahmad.

all methods of deciding such a point—that of actual experiment. I therefore ordered Ahmad to go out and get some at once. "How much?" he asked. "Indeed," I replied, "I have no idea; but get enough." He went out to the market and returned with, I should say, about half an ounce of some stuff looking like dried clover heads, which had cost four piastres, and was to be mixed, so the Jew who sold it had told him, with a little tobacco and smoked in a "Mada" (water pipe). This amount would be sufficient to produce the happiest effects on at least two persons. I cannot help thinking that that Jew allowed a perverted sense of humour to get the better of his cupidity on this occasion, or perhaps the little idiot Ahmad neglected to make it clear that we had never smoked the stuff before. After lunch we filled up the Mada in the manner directed, and sat on the couch pulling at it alternately.

For a long time nothing happened, and we came to the conclusion that the Jew must have played us some scurvy trick—given us the wrong stuff, or an insufficient quantity—for I was sure that for four piastres one ought to get enough hashish to have some effect anyway. "Just like a Jew," I said, and curiously enough this reflection struck us both as irresistibly funny, and we burst out laughing. More, we were unable to help laughing, and went on till cyanosis with threatening asphyxia caused us to stop exhausted, and utterly unable to recollect what the joke had been about. These strange paroxysms continued at intervals, interrupted by seemingly interminable reveries on subjects most strange and diverse. Among the curious effects the drug was producing, the retardation of time was the most striking; it seemed hours since we had begun smoking, and an ordinary action, such as raising the hand to the head, seemed to take several minutes. I became conscious of the separation of my thoughts into several distinct strata. In the uppermost I was reflecting that I was rather a fool to take the stuff at all, and that the dose must have been excessive; in another I was wandering through an endless series of colonnades, each connected with the next by a flight of marble steps flanked by dark green bushes with huge flowers of vivid blue,

while in yet another stratum something was causing me to laugh helplessly and idiotically at nothing at all. A sort of subconscious sanity remains intact, so that the smoker can at any moment pull himself together by an effort of will, and regain temporarily perfect control of his movements and speech, though the highest faculties, such as judgment, probably remain clouded. Just before we went to sleep I was able to note that Ahmad's pupils were widely dilated, and that my heart's action was slightly accelerated, with a tendency to the production of extra systoles. I wrote this down with a view to seeing later how my handwriting was affected. It turned out to be no worse than usual.

We did not wake for many hours, and were by no means sober when we did. Hashish differs from alcohol in this way also: the intoxication it produces lasts much longer, and is not dissipated by sleep. It was twenty-four hours at least before we got rid of the effects; but of course we had taken a large overdose.

During the month of March all kinds of rumours were current in the town as to the progress of the relieving army, the battles that were being fought, and the enormous losses the Arabs were suffering. We made friends with one of the sentries, a Syrian Arab, who came on duty twice every twenty-four hours. This man detested the Turks, and harboured some private grudge against Hamdi Effendi, which made him willing to be of what service he could to us. I found him of great use in several ways, not least among them that I could get from him reliable information as to the orders issued to the troops, the number of Turkish casualties, and other matters that interested me. The worst thing about compulsory service is the inevitable inclusion in the ranks of some men disloyal to the country they serve. This is more especially so in the Turkish army, which contains men of many different races and creeds, some of them avowedly hostile to Ottoman domination. No Christian or Jewish soldiers, by the way, are sent to the Yemen.

The Turkish army, excellent as it is in some respects, ought, considering the immense reserves of fighting men it has to draw upon, to be still better.

The relations between officers and men are not always satisfactory. Little or no distinction is drawn between commissioned and non-commissioned rank. Imprisonment and even corporal punishment is inflicted quite impartially on both. It is no uncommon thing for the colonel on parade to box the ears of his junior officers. Mohammed Ali Pasha was particularly fond of administering correction to his subordinates in this manner. When he arrived at the coast after the siege he found that no proper arrangements had been made for the embarkation of some troops he desired to send to Geezan. He sent for the port captain and there and then, standing on the quay, smacked his face.

Another great mistake is made in allowing the Vali and other high officials to make appointments to or dismissals from the subordinate posts at their own caprice. Not only does this practice lead to corruption, but the officer holding such an appointment dare not in many cases exercise his authority for fear of incurring the enmity of some one who may, through his own dismissal, the next day be in a position to retaliate on him.

Since the revolution the officers of the army have become divided into two distinct classes, the one consisting of officers of the old *régime*, generally illiterate men who, starting from the ranks, have won their positions by hard work and soldierly qualities; the other, the "Maktabie" (Collegian) class, consisting of men educated at the military college, who have passed the required examinations. After the deposition of Abdul Hamid, many officers of the higher ranks were dismissed and others were reduced in grade. Some unfortunate officers went from Major-General to Second Lieutenant. This was not done by way of punishment, but as a necessary preliminary to the reorganization of the Army. Izzet Pasha himself had gone down a step, and so had the old Albanian Pasha who would have it that I was a rogue.

Things like these do not make for good discipline or good feeling in an army. The old-fashioned officer who has spent his life in the field does not relish being ordered about by the Maktabie many years his junior, whose knowledge of war is "made in Germany." He does not say much about it, for the Turkish peasant is a man

of few words, but he does not love the new *régime* any the more for the way he has been treated. The fact is that the "friends of progress," as Abdul Wahid calls them, have, as usual, rather overdone it. However scientific war may have become it can still no more be taught by books alone than can violin-playing. If I were raising a regiment in Turkey it would be from the rough-bearded, unkempt-looking ruffians with dirty uniforms, down-at-heel slippers, and heavy, curved swords of a pattern long obsolete, that may be seen in any garrison town sitting in the dingy cafés sucking water pipes and playing back-gammon, that I should choose my own officers.

The state of affairs is rendered worse by the fact that in a place like Sanaa there are no amusements whatever for officers or men in their leisure hours. Away from their families—for only the rich can afford to bring them—they have nothing to occupy their thoughts, no games, theatres, clubs, or distractions of any sort, and it is not surprising that scandal, quarrelling, and vice of all sorts should result from *ennui*.

During the siege, some of the more thoughtful among the officers, those who had been to Europe and used their eyes while they were there, perceived the importance of this point, and tried their best to get up games for the men. A few energetic spirits do not easily leaven a mass of apathy, but still they accomplished something.

A few wrestling tournaments were organized, and a curious game at which the players squat in a circle facing towards the centre while one of the number, armed with a "rope's end," walks round outside till, choosing his victim, he hits him as hard as he can across the back. He then has to throw down the rope and run once round the entire circle and squat down in his place before his enemy, who picks it up and pursues, can catch him. The latter then takes the rope and the game continues. It does not sound a very amusing game, and it is in fact rather painful, but the soldiers love it, and it goes on to the accompaniment of shrieks of merriment, especially when some senior officer good-humouredly takes part for a little.

The garrison possessed a band which played in the citadel every evening at eight o'clock for about half an

hour, and at any other time, particularly during a battle, when it was considered that a little music would cheer things up. It was not a good band, and its *répertoire* was very limited, but we appreciated it enormously.

Towards the end of March it was made known officially that the rebels had been driven from the Menakha position with great loss, and that Izzet Pasha's advance guard had reached Sook-el-Khamis. This news was confirmed by a sudden activity on the part of Mohammed Ali Pasha, our commander, who evidently intended, by creating a diversion from Sanaa, to facilitate the relieving army's advance over the difficult ground still intervening. A rumour besides was gaining ground that the relieving army had suffered a serious reverse, and been compelled to return to the coast. It was no doubt with a view to giving the lie to this and similar stories current, that the Turks engaged in a succession of sorties. The first of these took place on March 20. A couple of batteries, with an infantry battalion and some machine guns, occupied the "donkey's back," a ridge lying east of the town, and shelled the enemy in Shaoob throughout most of the day. The guns must have fired quite a thousand rounds, but the effect on the houses and towers was surprisingly small, for the common shell passed clean through them without bursting. Howitzers with high explosives would have been very effective had the Turks possessed any at the time. Towards the end of the day the Arabs made a counter-attack from the east, out of sight of the town. We heard heavy rifle and machine-gun fire, which lasted for some time. The force returned at nightfall, having suffered, so we heard, a loss in killed of about twenty men. This is a subject, however, on which the Turks are always very reticent. Every precaution is taken to prevent the extent of their casualties becoming known. The dead are either buried where they fall, or smuggled out to the cemetery after dark, and the wounded are kept out of sight as much as possible. Official accounts, especially when furnished to newspapers, in nine cases out of ten are quite untrustworthy. The Arabs were reported, as usual, to have lost very heavily, but this was evidently a pure conjecture, as to the truth of which I personally was rather sceptical.

Certainly if any one was injured by the Turkish time shrapnel it can only have been by accident, for they burst it at an altitude at which it is only effective as a firework display.

The second sortie took place a week later. A force of about the same strength advanced some little distance to the south, shelled the enemy out of a position they were holding on a ridge overlooking the town from that quarter, and bombarded the village of Haddah, which the infantry entered later after some hand-to-hand fighting. The Turkish force had to retire about midday in somewhat of a hurry, having been outflanked by the enemy, who had re-occupied in considerable force the ridge taken earlier in the day. Some of the soldiers brought back with them heads of the Arabs who had been killed, which, stuck on bayonets, they paraded round the town, to the great edification of all beholders. Hamdi Effendi was careful to explain to me that the number of these did not represent the total "bag," but only such of the enemy as had been slain in single combat and *à l'arme blanche*.

The Turks made their third sortie on March 29. This was of exceptional interest to me because it was the most serious engagement of the siege, and I was able to witness it from a commanding position within a few hundred yards of the actual fighting, while yet incurring little more danger than one does in watching a bull-fight.

On this occasion the Turks made a determined effort to drive the enemy from Shaoob. Their batteries were posted on the "donkey's back" at daybreak, and aided by the guns of the citadel and those over the gates on that side of the city, bombarded the position. Hamdi Effendi took Ahmad and myself on to the roof of the Government buildings, where we found ourselves about midway between the Turkish artillery position and its target, and only just out of the line of fire of the citadel guns. This roof, like the minarets of the Bakili Mosque, and indeed every other point of vantage, was crowded with spectators. The streets were empty and the shops were shut, for all Sanaa had gone to see the sport. Though within easy range the Arabs refrained from

firing on these closely packed groups, for the reason that among them were many Arabs favourable to their cause.

About noon the artillery redoubled their efforts, the bombardment became fast and furious, the houses and towers began to come tumbling down, and the drifting balls of white smoke made by the bursting time-shrapnel filled the air. Under cover of this about 1,000 infantry advanced down the ridge, and in spite of the heavy rifle-fire with which the Arabs received them, succeeded in carrying the line of trees and the buildings on the outskirts of the village. Unluckily a shell too well placed caused the collapse of a very tall tower, which had already been hit many times just after it had been captured by the infantry, and several of the brave soldiers were crushed in the ruins. This tragic accident was no one's fault, for it is far better to risk these things happening than for the guns to cease fire just when their support is most wanted. Another regiment now sallied from the Shaoob gate and made a determined attack from that quarter. The band struck up a patriotic air, the bugles summoned the troops to advance, the guns fired salvoes, and the musketry fire swelled to a continuous roar. The Arabs stood their ground bravely among the trees and ruined buildings, and succeeded in holding their own, so that before sundown the Turks had to retire, leaving not a few of their number on the field. The Arab losses must have been very heavy, and would have been much more so could the Turkish artillery commander have been persuaded to stick to percussion fuses until he had taught his men the proper use of the other sort. Parties of the Arabs were found roped together—the idea of this being that no one man in the gang can then give way to cowardice without his comrades becoming aware of it.

The last fighting took place two days before the relief. The rebels were holding the Asr ridge in force, and were supposed to be intending to dispute its possession with Izzet Pasha's army, which was now at hand. With a view to making a diversion a force of about 1,500 infantry with eight guns issued from Sanaa to engage the enemy posted in a village and grove of trees about a mile and a half from the Hodeidah gate. After a bom-

bardment with shrapnel lasting for some hours, which I should say was entirely ineffective, the infantry attacked, but could make no headway. The whole force returned to Sanaa before midday.

That afternoon and during the following day we heard the booming of distant artillery fire from the direction of Senam Pasha, and knew that relief was near. On the morning of April 5, after a short engagement on the Asr ridge, the Arabs abandoned all their positions and retired northwards, and on the evening of that day General Izzet Pasha himself, with the eight regiments composing his advance guard, entered the town.

A triumphal arch, decorated with red cloth and flowers, had been run up the day before in the square before the Sabah Gate, that is the gate in the old wall connecting Sanaa with Bir-el-Azab. It bore that text from the Koran which may often be seen engraved on sword-blades and other weapons, "Nasrun min Allahi wa fathun kareeb" (Help from God and near victory). Great were the rejoicings. All Sanaa in its best clothes came out in the rain to welcome the General, every house in the town was illuminated that night, except my own. In spite of the downpour the streets were full of people "Mafficking" till a late hour, for the "state of siege" was at an end. I would not allow any outward signs of rejoicing, on the ground that as British subjects we were neutrals. In order however not to let this great occasion pass uncelebrated, I gave Ahmad enough money to buy the best supper that Sanaa could provide for Hamdi Effendi, himself, and the other servants, and I further presented them with several bottles of wine and some mastic. Hamdi Effendi, however, was past eating anything long before supper time, and so was the cook: "the Napani" could not be found, and Ahmad, anxious no doubt that my feelings should not suffer, did his best to dispose of the whole lot himself. The lecture I read him the following day on the beauty of moderation in all things, more especially in the use of alcoholic liquor, would perhaps have made a greater impression on him had not the recollection of our unfortunate experiment with the hashish been so recent in his mind.

The morning following the relief was devoted to the

obsequies of some officers who had been killed the day before. In the afternoon a grand review of the garrison and the newly arrived troops was held in the square before the Government buildings. When all the regiments had marched past a "pow-wow" among the officers was held, and Izzet Pasha made a patriotic speech.

We heard now for the first time the true account of what had taken place elsewhere in the Yemen, for though we had been the whole time in heliographic communication with Hodeidah, no news had been allowed to leak out, except what was favourable to the Turks. It seemed that the relieving force had encountered much less opposition than was anticipated. There had been a certain amount of fighting round about Menakha and many villages had been destroyed, but the total loss in killed on the way up did not exceed eighty men. Cholera had broken out soon after the first troops arrived, and had followed the army up country. Fifteen men a day were dying at Menakha and a quarantine was to be established at Sook-el-Khamis to prevent, if possible, the disease reaching Sanaa.

The towns of Yerim and Ibb had been captured by the rebels, but the Turkish garrisons were holding out in their forts. At the first named some guns were lost, the town was plundered, and many of the inhabitants were massacred.

I heard later, from a fairly reliable source, that from the outbreak of hostilities up to the relief of Sanaa the Arabs took in all six hundred and twenty Turkish prisoners, twenty-two pieces of artillery, and two machine guns.* Most of these losses took place at the small detached posts scattered throughout the Yemen. The guns and most of the prisoners were at Khania, a place about five days' journey to the north of Sanaa. It seemed likely that they would be removed to Shaharah, the Imam's stronghold, in face of the Turkish advance. The prisoners were being treated with consideration and, but for the incident at Yerim, no outrages had been committed by the rebels.

The post at Senam Pasha had held out to the last.

* I do not guarantee the accuracy of these figures. The number of guns taken may have been less than stated.

Though the garrison, which numbered less than seventy men, had suffered much from scarcity of food and was short of ammunition, it had none the less refused to capitulate even on the most liberal terms. Harassed by a heavy though ineffective bombardment, and constantly assailed by vastly superior numbers, surrender might have been held excusable. The successful defence of this little post reflects great credit on the officers and men who took part in it.

The condition of the troops and of their equipment, when they arrived, was good, except for the most important part of a soldier's outfit, after his rifle—his boots. Many men at the review limped past with their feet wrapped in rags. This is a matter in which all Governments, our own included, are much too inclined to make a false economy, and forget the truism about the strength of any chain. To my mind the most expensive boots obtainable, made to measure, are not too good for the soldier about to take the field. If they cost five pounds a pair it will none the less come much cheaper in the end than having the marching powers of the army impaired by a large number of men with sore feet. No soldier need apologize for insisting, in and out of season, that it is forethought in matters of this kind that wins the day. The greatest general of all time said that the only figure of speech of any practical value was repetition.

Having ventured in these pages on certain criticisms of the Turkish army, I should like to say here that as a fighting machine I consider it second to one only in Europe. All its defects of bad armament, bad training, and bad administration are made up for by the excellent quality of the soldiers themselves. Seen in peace-time it is an object for derision ; in war for admiration.

General Izzet Pasha had been appointed Commander-in-Chief with plenipotentiary powers, but Mohammed Ali Pasha retained his position as Governor-General, and was not, in theory, superseded. This state of affairs seemed likely to cause difficulties, and so it did. In selecting this officer for the supreme command the Porte acted wisely, for he is a good soldier, with experience of the Yemen, and popular with the Arabs. Ahmad Feizi Pasha was getting too old, and Yusuf

Pasha, whose very name was a terror to the Imam, had, unfortunately, been hanged by the Young Turks some time previously.

The day after the relief I visited Signor Caprotti, who was in great spirits, and thought that our troubles were over. Izzet Pasha was a personal friend of his, and a man far too well informed and in touch with Western Europe to harbour any such ridiculous suspicions as those from which we had both suffered so much during the siege. He advised me to wait till I could communicate with the Consul, and then, seeking an interview with the General, to explain matters frankly to him. It is probable that, but for the peculiar arrangement which left it uncertain who was actually responsible for the civil administration of the province, the discreditable and ridiculous incidents that followed would never have occurred. The Turks, however, like the Chinese attach great importance to "saving face." When it has been decided to supersede some one in command the central authorities try to avoid doing it directly and in so many words. The officer to be supplanted is sent on an expedition and then suddenly recalled to Stamboul, or some similar device is employed to make it appear that he relinquishes his appointment for any reason rather than the real one.

I was disappointed to find that the mail which had been delayed so long and defended so gallantly in Senam Pasha contained no letters for me, nor was my baggage with it as I had thought. I wrote at once to the Consul, informing him of all that had taken place since my arrival, and asking him to use his good offices with Izzet Pasha, who represented, or so I thought, the highest authority. On receiving this letter the Consul sent a long telegram to the Commander-in-Chief, in which, after congratulating him on his successful operations, he complained of the inhospitable conduct of the authorities towards myself, explained exactly who I was and what my intentions were, and gave him every official assurance that I was not an agent of the British Government, nor had my presence in Sanaa the smallest political significance. He sent this telegram in duplicate to Izzet Pasha and myself.

Immediately on receiving it I wrote asking for an interview, which was promptly granted. Accordingly I visited the Pasha at his private house in Bir-el-Azab, and was courteously received. He seemed to me a good-humoured personage, something of a *vieux marcheur*, yet business-like and of a quick appreciation. I think he disliked me at first sight, and that I forfeited the remnants of his good opinion when I told him that I did not play bridge. This, I admit, did seem rather incredible in an Englishman: but I simply cannot stick the game unless one plays for high points, and if it is a case of gambling I prefer poker or baccarat. None the less he listened very carefully to my story and compared it with the Consul's telegram. He admitted that suspicions had been entertained, reminded me of the very unusual circumstances, and promised to do all he could, though of course, he said, he could not interfere with the civil authorities. Much puzzled, I responded that I made no complaints whatever, and quite understood that in war-time all measures are justifiable that are deemed necessary, whether they actually are so or not, and that I was sure that a word from His Excellency would put everything right.

In answering the Consul's telegram Izzet Pasha denied that any suspicions were entertained. All that I complained of had been done for my own protection and so on!—the old gag that I was beginning to know by heart.

Time passed and nothing happened: the sentries on my house were not removed, and the intolerable nuisance of being accompanied everywhere I went by the spy, Hamdi Effendi, continued. It was universally held that I was a prisoner, and when the other prisoners were released surprise was expressed that I should remain under arrest. In fact things got worse in some ways, for the regiment which had formed the guard over my house during the siege was sent to Senam Pasha, and another took its place composed of a very different lot of men from the first, with many of whom Ahmad had made friends. The sentries found by this new regiment did not seem capable of comprehending their orders. They would prevent the servants entering or leaving the

house and order us off the roof. One went so far as to throw stones at us when this order was not obeyed. The more I complained the worse these annoyances became.

During the siege I had put up with all this as patiently as might be, but the time had come to make a fuss. I therefore wrote to Izzet Pasha asking very politely when he proposed to remove the sentries. I was told that the matter pertained to the Vali's office, which on being approached referred me to Izzet Pasha, on the ground that it fell within the jurisdiction of the military authorities ! At last, after much delay, I did succeed in getting the sentries taken away, only to find to my disgust that Hamdi Effendi was to remain. As it was to his compulsory escort that I objected more than anything, I protested both to Izzet Pasha and the Vali, pointing out that it was quite impossible for me to do any work in these circumstances, and asking the reason for it. The Consul likewise protested, and a three-cornered correspondence followed, with the details of which I will not weary the reader. The upshot of the whole business was that the authorities proved to be inflexible on this point, to the surprise and disappointment of both the Consul and myself.

I was visited by Izzet Pasha's A.D.C., a young officer with a most remarkable talent for languages, whose turn-out, though it would have led to his being put under instant arrest had he belonged to an English regiment and ventured to come on parade in it, was none the less very much smarter than any other Turkish officer I ever saw. At this interview I repeated all I had said before, and suggested that we might just as well lay our cards on the table, as it was no good pretending that the authorities were not suspicious, because I knew better. I offered to quote the exact orders given to the sentries, which rather disconcerted him, and referred to one or two other matters that had come to my knowledge. As for protection I did not want it, and both the Consul and myself had offered to sign a document waiving any possible claim to compensation in the event of my being killed in Sanaa or any other part of Arabia within the Ottoman sphere of influence.

To this the A.D.C., waving aside these arguments

with the nonchalance of a Foreign Office clerk answering an official letter, had the impudence to respond that they did not recognize the Consul as the representative of Great Britain except in commercial matters. I asked him to give me this in writing, but he was not quite such a fool as all that. He informed me that it would be necessary to get a formal assurance from the Embassy at Stamboul that no claim should be made on my behalf: then and then only would the local authorities be pleased to remove all restrictions and allow me to do as I pleased.

Though in no way deceived by this obvious subterfuge, for many weeks must elapse before the necessary assurance could be obtained, even if the Embassy consented to give it, I consented, notwithstanding, to make the application, and did actually send a telegram to the Consul on the subject, which got so mixed up in transit that it was difficult to tell when it arrived whether the language was meant for Arabic or Turkish. In the meantime, I said that, as I did not consider it consistent with our dignity for Englishmen in Turkish towns to be seen about under police surveillance, I would not go out at all.

It was quite plain that they were more suspicious of me than ever, though why they should be I could not comprehend, and it began to look as if trouble was brewing for some one.

The gates of Sanaa were opened on the morning after the relief, the country people flocked in with their produce, and prices dropped fifty per cent. Troops continued to arrive daily, and the town was soon full of soldiers—Turkish, Laz, Albanian, and of other races. They were well behaved with the exception of the Albanians, and the property of the citizens was respected by them. The Albanians however were so turbulent that it was decided to send most of them off on an expedition where they could give vent to their superfluous energy in some more fighting. The first regiments that arrived had not been many hours in Sanaa before several affrays had taken place between the Albanian soldiers and the townspeople. Some Jewish wine-shops were plundered, and the "rais-el-baladiyah," that is to say, the Lord Mayor, was seriously injured. We heard most

blood-curdling stories of their behaviour on the way up, their reckless valour and ferocity. Yet they look the most harmless people in the world, with their fair hair, blue eyes, and innocent expressions. The Arabs, especially the Bedou camel-men of the Hedjaz, sometimes make the mistake of judging by appearances, only to learn, if they have time to profit by the knowledge acquired, that it is safer to play the fool with fulminate than to fall foul of an "Arnootie."

Mohammed Ali Pasha set off soon after the relief with a strong expeditionary force to operate against the rebels in the north-west. He was anxious, so it was said, for a change after his enforced inaction, and to show that his supineness hitherto had been dictated by motives of policy and was not due to any distaste for service in the field. He returned to Sanaa without having accomplished very much.

I received a visit from one of a party of three French engineers who had come up from Hodeidah to survey a route for the proposed railway. They had been having an unpleasant time, having been compelled to wait in Menakha for nearly a month while the cholera epidemic was raging there. There were thus no less than five non-Ottoman subjects in Sanaa at one time. I returned their visit, but avoided having any further communication with them owing to my reluctance to inflict myself on any one so long as I was compelled to drag around that Frankenstein's monster—the hateful Hamdi Effendi. He insisted on following me into their house and into the presence of the engineer. There he sat, the "tufailie,"* more *de trop* than an Archbishop at the "Abbaye." When the engineer asked me into the next room to see his apparatus, up got Hamdi Effendi and followed us. I said nothing by way of explanation, nor was it necessary. Signor Caprotti had told them how the land lay.

The concession for the building of this railway had been ratified since I left Hodeidah. The negotiations had been prolonged over the question of a kilometric guarantee, but once settled, the French company to whom it was leased lost no time in putting the work in

* Ar. = unbidden guest.

hand. The insurrection did not prevent their landing materials and beginning work on the first section. It was necessary as a preliminary to find some better landing place than Hodeidah, and a bay a few miles up the coast was ultimately chosen. When I returned to the coast in June, all was ready to lay the line between that point and Hodeidah, and from there the track had been taken about half-way to Bagil. The present contract is only for a railway between Hodeidah and Hageilah —that is from the coast to the foot of the mountains. These engineers who came to Sanaa were to discover, if they could, a practicable way of bringing it up to the capital—but that idea is still somewhat in the air, and not likely to materialize for the present. They went south early in May with an escort of a regiment, and I heard no more of them.

Some people, competent to judge, expect this railway to be a failure financially. It will certainly be of great use to the Turks, even if it never gets farther than Hageilah. I very much doubt if it will reach Sanaa for many years to come. Apart from the great cost of construction, there is the difficulty of holding the line to be considered.

The anniversary of the Sultan's accession, April 27, was observed as a public holiday. Another review was held at which the garrison which had defended Senam Pasha so well marched past by itself amid great applause. Some of the regiments which had come up with Izzet Pasha drilled well and looked quite smart. I noticed that a lot more guns had arrived, including two large howitzers. It was a pity these were not in Sanaa during the siege.

After the review Izzet Pasha and Mohammed Ali held a reception in the Hukumeh. They sat at the end of a large room in full uniform, both of course blazing with orders ; the guests were ushered in, sat down on chairs round the room, partook of some sweets handed to them, stayed about three minutes, bowed and retired. The various classes of Ottoman officials went first, the secretariat being followed by the medical corps, the police, and so on. Then the non-official citizens were admitted about thirty at a time. Finally Signor Caprotti and myself, who, being the only foreign subjects in Sanaa,

formed a class to ourselves, were ushered into the presence. This was the first time I had spoken to Mohammed Ali or indeed had seen him at close quarters. I found him to be a handsome man in the prime of life, with a quiet, pleasant voice and courteous manner. At night there were the usual illuminations. These are so much a feature of life in Turkish towns that the wealthier citizens keep a stock of lamps specially for the purpose. I did not buy any lamps, but as there was no reasonable excuse for not falling into line on this auspicious occasion, I allowed Ahmad to waste a tin of paraffin and many rounds of revolver ammunition in his efforts to celebrate it in a becoming manner. That the house was not burnt down was due purely to good luck. Ahmad did his best with the materials available.

CHAPTER XV

WE ESCAPE

My story has followed, till now, the most conventional lines. All travellers' tales run on in much the same way : there is the odyssey, the arrival, details as to outfit, descriptions of places and persons encountered, and the traveller's own adventures and impressions, the whole flavoured with anecdotes not always entirely relevant to the subject-matter of the work.

It must sorrowfully be admitted that the remaining chapters of this book partake less of the character of an ordinary narrative than a confession. I will try to spare my readers' feelings as much as possible by cutting it short, but the more sensitive had better perhaps skip this part and read in the appendix the opinion of the Foreign Secretary on the subject—which ought to be good enough for any one. I write *de profundis*. From all privy conspiracy, sedition, and rebellion—but it is better to make a clean breast of it. Ahmad and I again defied "the wishes and express injunctions" of the local authorities.

We began doing it just after my interview with Izzet Pasha's A.D.C., that time he had the infernal impudence to say that the authorities did not recognize the British Consul except as a commercial agent. We introduced into my house, unknown to those authorities, at dead of night, an individual called Muslih who was, so the cook said, the biggest scoundrel in Sanaa. In spite of the extreme distrust with which I regarded Suleiman our Abyssinian cook, I was quite prepared to take his word for it on this occasion. I had to use him because I had no one better to go to. He had lived nearly all his life in Sanaa and knew most of the scoundrels there,

or to put it another way, was on speaking terms with most of the population. I was able to make it worth his while to keep to the conventional honour among thieves, and so trusted to his good faith—and my luck.

This man Muslih, it appeared, was once in the service of the Turkish Government. He had been ejected therefrom, and now made his living by buying cartridges from the soldiers and selling them at a large profit to the Imam. He feared not God, neither regarded man, would steal kohl from the eye of his own mother, hated the Turks, and had that knowledge of the country which only brigands can hope to acquire. Evidently he was the very man for the wicked design I had in contemplation.

There was a little misunderstanding at the outset because Muslih, like every one else in Sanaa, took me for a very much more important person than I was. He thought I wanted to go over to the Imam, and had chosen him to carry out the necessary arrangements. No doubt rewards and preferment when that pretender should come to his own, and a substantial *douceur* from the British Government in the meantime, were in his mind. When I at last succeeded in disabusing him of this idea he was disappointed, but still quite willing to do business on terms. I told him that circumstances might lead me to want to quit Sanaa suddenly and secretly any time within the next month, and that I wanted a guide and a small escort to take me to Marib. I warned him that the Turks would make every effort to stop me and would probably pursue ; and that in making his arrangements he must bear that in mind. Being an utter stranger in the country, I was ready to leave all details to him, provided that I got there somehow. In case I should not want him after all, I would pay him a fee of £5 for his trouble, provided that everything was held in readiness for the space of thirty days.

I must admit to having been most favourably impressed by this robber. He reflected long before giving an answer, and when he did, it was straightforward and to the point. He would not, at any price, undertake to arrange my escape from Sanaa : that was beyond his power. If however I could manage that part of the

business myself, he would meet me at any time and place I might choose, with a small band of desperadoes, fully armed, and game for anything from pitch and toss to manslaughter. The escape accomplished, he could promise me that we should see Marib within a week, and that the whole Ottoman army, horse, foot, and artillery, would be powerless to prevent it. For these services he asked the sum of thirty Turkish pounds.

Instead of beating him down, as of course he expected, I accepted his offer on the spot; and ordered the Koran to be brought. I made him swear by all that we both held most sacred to play fair in this business if never again. It was far too serious for bargaining, and in acting thus I took the best chance of a bad lot.

I took this step—I refer to my dealings with Muslih—because I had become convinced that the authorities had no intention of allowing me to leave Sanaa except under escort, *en route* for the coast. Izzet Pasha's sympathetic interest in my projects for the exploration of the interior I no longer took seriously. The very fact that no suggestion was made to me that I ought to return became ominous. Moreover my interview with the A.D.C., some conversations overheard by Ahmad, who, it will be news to some people, knows Turkish quite well, and warnings I received from other sources, indicated approaching trouble as surely as does a falling barometer the coming storm. There was one thing quite certain: that after all that had passed, I was not going back to Hodeidah without trying conclusions with that terrible Turk, Mohammed Ali Pasha, Governor-General of the Yemen.

There is one thing that I should like to make clear in self-defence. If I had wanted to go to the Imam I should not have employed Muslih. That could have been arranged quite easily, but it will be understood that I am here on rather dangerous ground. I must beg the reader to take my word for it: "Then," he may ask, "why didn't you go?" I would have in almost any other circumstances; it would have suited me in every way to do so, but I was tied by the assurances given by the Consul to the authorities concerning me. Had I done so, it would have been open to the Turks to accuse

the Consul and even the British Government of bad faith. For this very reason I had always hitherto avoided asking any official aid or countenance from the Foreign Office or its representatives, and never will I again. The event has proved that my scruples were excessive, as will appear from a perusal of the correspondence at the end of this book. By repudiating the Consul and myself in this matter the Foreign Secretary has as good as told the Turks that they were justified in regarding me as an enemy. I have no doubt Mohammed Ali is sorry now that he did not hang me when he had the chance, and I regret equally that I was prevented in the manner I have stated from taking this obvious and most tempting way out of all my difficulties. However, all that is finished and done with. I cannot at any rate be accused of not having "played the game" with all concerned in this business, and the Turks have not heard the last of rebellions in the Yemen.

Things came to a climax in the following way. In order to be prepared for every contingency, for my luggage had at last arrived, it only remained to keep in my possession a large sum of money in cash. Signor Caprotti, who was acting as my banker, became aware, from this heavy draft being made on him, that something was in the wind. Being questioned I told him the course that, in certain eventualities, I proposed to follow. When he heard the plan, he condemned it most strongly. Even if I were successful in leaving Sanaa, which was doubtful, there was, he said, no hope whatever of my return. In the actual state of affairs, suspected as I was, and with no friends among the Arabs on whom I could rely at Marib, the scheme was sheer madness, and merely an uncomfortable way of committing suicide. I was much impressed by his arguments, for I have no sympathy whatever with fools who endanger their own and other people's lives in enterprises that are hopeless from the start. I decided in the end to follow his advice, which was to get the Turks to give me an escort to Katiba, the frontier town on the road to Aden, and once out of Turkish territory to work my way east along the border, and then go north to Marib. He did not consider this impossible of achievement, though he did not much like

the idea; nor did I, for I had made no arrangements with the Aden Government, and did not know what view they would take. However, as it seemed on the whole the best thing to do, and it was plain that I should gain nothing by staying on in Sanaa, I wrote to the Vali telling him that I wished to go to Aden, and would like an escort, though I could dispense with it if it were inconvenient to find one for me. In answer to this I got a verbal message from the Mudir to say that he himself would escort me to Hodeidah in four days' time: therefore would I please make ready to start. "Hullo!" I thought, "what's up now?" I went round at once to see the Mudir, who wrung his hands and told me that he could say nothing, and that if I had any questions to ask I must see the Vali.

His Excellency was evidently expecting my visit. "It is curious," he said, "that your application for an escort should have reached me at the same time as a telegram from our Foreign Minister ordering me to send you back to Hodeidah at once."

"Very curious indeed," I replied; "no doubt the British Ambassador has given similar instructions to the Consul, and I shall receive orders from him in due course."

"You must leave on Thursday."

"I await the Consul's orders to do so."

"Look here," said the Vali truculently, "does the English Consul give orders in this country or do I?"

"Your Excellency is well aware that an order of this kind must be transmitted through the proper channel," I returned, keeping my temper with great difficulty; "you will doubtless allow me to remain until I have telegraphed to the Consul and received a reply."

"No, I won't," said the Vali; "you will start on Thursday morning."

I returned to my house reflecting on the way, for there was no time to be lost. The nearest telegraph station was at Sook-el-Khamis, forty kilometres distant, for the line between that place and Sanaa had not yet been repaired, and therefore it was impossible for me to get an answer from the Consul in the time allotted. The plot was quite transparent. The Vali had decided to

"stand the racket," and send me back to Hodeidah without reference to the Consul; who would make a fuss of course, but that could not be helped.

I thought that by acting with sufficient promptitude I might frustrate this little scheme in spite of all. Within an hour of my interview with the Vali, "the Napani" left on a donkey with a telegram for the Consul, and instructions to send it as "urgent," bribe the clerks if necessary to clear the line, await the answer at Sook-el-Khamis, and bring it back with all possible despatch. If "the Napani" rode hard and the Consul acted promptly, as I knew he would, I calculated on getting a reply late on Wednesday afternoon, and I looked forward to sending it round to Mohammed Ali with a little note telling him, in diplomatic language, to go to the devil.

The Consul, when he received my wire, sent an urgent telegram to the Vali; and also one to myself, which ran, so far as I remember, "You must obey no orders except from me: on no account leave Sanaa. Show this telegram to the Vali." I should have got it in time if "the Napani" had not been interfered with—but the next morning I got a message from him to say he had been stopped by the police by order of the Vali, my telegram had been taken away from him and sent back to Sanaa, and, though it had been returned, and he had been allowed to proceed, it was hopeless to expect him back on Wednesday. This incident was common gossip in the market that day, and every one was laughing at it. Suleiman brought another piece of news a little later. The Mudir of police himself, disguised as an Arab, had passed the night in the house next to mine, while over thirty policemen were watching my abode, every means of access to or egress from it being now guarded.

Much as my conduct may be open to censure, in relating what happened I am consoled by my conviction that the reader would most probably have done exactly the same thing himself in similar circumstances. Who would consent, after standing a siege and being harassed as I had, to be packed off to the coast like a bale of merchandise? Besides, the Vali had, so I considered, by his outrageous action in stopping my communication

to the Consul, begun hostilities: diplomatic relations between us might be considered at an end.

Fortunately, I had had sufficient good sense to make certain preparations for an event that I had to some extent foreseen. Everything required for an escape was actually in the house, including a rope ladder which Ahmad and I had made ourselves, and women's clothes for both of us. The costume of a Turkish lady makes the best disguise I know of, partly because of the thick veil that may be worn, and still more because, so great is the respect in which women are held, that even a policeman is very reluctant to address one. We had in fact several alternative schemes, from among which we had merely to choose the best.

That night (*i.e.* the Monday), after making Hamdi Effendi drunk, never a difficult matter, but particularly easy on this occasion, owing to his joy at the prospect of getting rid of us—Ahmad and I went into committee. Our first care was to ascertain the truth of the report that the house was surrounded. In order to do this I stole quietly into the room over the porch, where Hamdi was sleeping off his debauch; then Ahmad, on hearing my whistle, threw open the front door and stepped out. Two policemen who had been hiding against the wall sprang forward to seize him, and were nearly frightened out of what senses they possessed by the dazzling glare I threw on them from above, with a powerful electric lantern. One of them gave a loud yell and performed a complete pirouette; Ahmad burst out laughing, went in, and slammed the door. Casting the rays up and down the street I saw other men hurrying forward. Evidently the report we had heard was no exaggeration.

This lamp was something new in Sanaa. The following day a merchant came to my house and offered to buy it at my own price; but I would not have parted with it just then for a great deal of money.

Returning to our conclave, it was obvious that our first plan, to slip out at night and use the rope ladder to descend the city wall, was no longer practicable. The idea of leaving the house by day disguised as women and hiding in the town was abandoned after long discussion for

the more simple plan of enticing Hamdi Effendi outside the gate and then running away from him. The great drawback to this lay in the fact that unless we escaped just before dark we should be recaptured for a certainty. Except for Gebel Nugoom and the village of Shaoob, the country round Sanaa is absolutely flat and open, without cover of any sort for several miles. The alarm once given, it would be the simplest thing in the world for horsemen to ride us down. Hamdi Effendi could never be induced to let us go more than a few hundred yards from the gate, and had always insisted on returning long before sundown. The difficulty was to devise a way to keep him quiet after he had become aware of our intention, and prevent his giving the alarm before we had got a fair start. I would not, of course, consent to any harm being done to him, and so in the end we decided to rely entirely on accurate timing. Ahmad's amendment to this proposal, namely, that he should suddenly pinion his arms while I anæsthetized him with ethyl chloride, was withdrawn by leave. I have always objected to using any kind of poison for criminal purposes.

The next morning I sent a message to Muslih informing him that we should escape from Sanaa on Wednesday evening, and that he must be at the *rendezvous* I appointed, a small tank near the town known as "the Magil," from the time it got dark till sunrise : if we had not arrived by then, he could consider the bargain at an end, pay his men out of the money he had received in advance, and keep the rest. I warned him that we were about to trust our lives to his good faith, and no reason existed that was good enough to prevent his punctual observance of these instructions. I got back a most reassuring reply from him.

We now proceeded to smuggle out to him the instruments, books, and clothes I had decided to take. In this work Suleiman's small nephew, a boy of about twelve years of age, played a useful *rôle*. Most of them left the house in the basket in which he brought the meat and vegetables. By Wednesday morning all had been safely delivered, and the police, so far as I knew, were still unsuspicious. I sent also one hundred and ten silver

dollars sewn up in cloth, in packets of ten. This may seem to have been an unwise thing to do, but there was really no help for it. We were bound to have the dollars, and we could not possibly carry them.

I did not tell Signor Caprotti of my purpose, because I wanted him to be able to swear, if necessary, that he knew nothing about it. Moreover I knew that he would strongly disapprove.

Pretending not to be aware that my telegram had been stopped, I affected to think that I should have to go on the Thursday as ordered, unless the Consul intervened in the meantime, which seemed unlikely to happen. The obvious conveniences of this had influenced me in deciding on our mode of departure, for I was enabled to pay my bills, sell my furniture and so on, without arousing suspicion. I had bought a mule and two donkeys some time before in order to get my luggage up from Hodeidah, and these I said I should use on the journey down, and dispose of on the coast.

I wrote two letters, one to the Consul, informing him officially of what had happened and what my intentions were : another to the Vali, apologizing for the liberty I was taking, begging him not to trouble himself further on my account, and thanking him for the kindness and courtesy he had shown me during my stay in Sanaa.

" He won't survive it. He'll die," said Ahmad as he handed this last one back to me.

" Inshallah," I replied as I fastened the envelope.

Only two were in the secret beside ourselves—Suleiman, the cook, and his nephew. We knew that Suleiman would be arrested, but it seemed unlikely that anything very serious could be done to him, especially as he claimed to be an Italian subject. I rewarded him on a scale to compensate him for a little imprisonment—and even some " koorbag," if it came to that.

Meanwhile we had to put up with a good deal. The affair was the talk of the town, and my unceremonious ejection was regarded with amusement not unmingled with pity. The condescending affability of Hamdi Effendi would in itself have tried the temper of the Archangel Gabriel. The Vali, he assured me many times, was acting for the best ; and though of course it was a

disappointment to me to have to go back like this—the decisions of the central Government were beyond discussion. Ahmad also was much laughed at by his acquaintances in the town. We bore all this with a meekness and fortitude most becoming; borne up by the knowledge that we were about to administer to Mohammed Ali "*quelque chose pour son rhume.*"

Wednesday morning came, and I told Hamdi Effendi that, as it was my last day, I thought of going outside the wall to take a few photographs of Sanaa as a memento of my visit. "The afternoon will be the best time when the sun gets low," I told him; "I will ride the mule, and you can ride one of the donkeys." Ahmad begged to be included. "Very well," I said, "you can ride the other, and I will photograph you both if you like." Hamdi Effendi, who, being extremely ugly, is naturally as vain as a peacock, was greatly pleased with the prospect and went off, promising to come in time, and (I reminded him) to wear his best clothes and a starched collar. It was only fitting that he should be dressed in a becoming manner on what promised to be such a very happy occasion.

Ahmad and I lunched, hurrying over it in the preoccupied manner that is peculiar to those whose nerves are tuned up, travellers who have to catch a train, and soldiers before a battle. We then arrayed ourselves for the adventure, which was rather a complicated business. We had each a sum of £75 in gold, sewn up in wash-leather, hung round the neck by a strong silk cord, and made to look as nearly as possible like the amulets the Arabs are so fond of carrying. Ahmad wore his black Zaidie costume under his ordinary clothes, and had many other things concealed about his person. My own disguise had been sent with the other things to Muslih, but still I had much to carry. I put on the shirt of mail I had brought from Europe under my Kuftan, and our weapons completed a *toilette*, which, as we were going to be photographed, excited no suspicion in our friend. Hamdi Effendi was punctual, but we were not. When we did descend, a closer observer might have noticed that we looked unusually stout. Various things went wrong with the harness, so that we did not

actually get started till nearly 4.30. I apologized for the delay. "No matter," said Hamdi affably, "I shall be rid of you in a few hours." "That you will, bedad," I thought to myself.

In my days of liberty, before the siege, I had carefully reconnoitred the ground, and so knew exactly where to go. The nearest spur of the mountains began about two miles south-east of the town; opposite to it, and within a quarter of a mile of the wall, there was a grove of trees round a well that seemed to have been made for our purpose. We left the town by the Yemen Gate and jogged along under the wall. We passed the barracks, and soon after encountered a regiment returning from exercise. I stopped to take a photograph, and again for the same purpose at the various gates and other points of interest we passed. One way and another, time passed, and it was near sundown when I suddenly remembered that I had taken no photograph of the town seen as a whole. Hamdi Effendi suggested rectifying this omission on our way out the next morning, but I explained that the sun would be in the wrong place. "Come on," I said, pointing to the little grove, "we can get it nicely from there; and hurry, for it is getting late." We cantered forward, followed by the unsuspecting police officer. As the Mudir put it in his report, "they had with them one mule and two donkeys beside Hamdi Effendi."

Arrived at the well we dismounted, and, ascending a little hillock near by, I had a good look round with my field-glasses. I observed that we were about four hundred yards from the nearest gate, but partially screened from view by the trees round the wall. A great many soldiers, including some mounted men, were to be seen on the road running alongside the wall, but in the space that separated us from the hills the only living objects were a couple of shepherds and a few sheep. All seemed going well. Two little boys from a neighbouring house had given up tip-cat to watch our proceedings.

After taking as long as I dared with the camera I descended and photographed Ahmad. I then proposed to do the same for Hamdi, but he had become suddenly nervous and irritable, and no longer wished for it. We must go back at once, he said; the sun was behind the

hills, and the gates were closed at nightfall. When at last we did mount, the girth of one of the saddles gave way in the most unexpected manner. While Hamdi and I were trying to repair this, Hamdi's donkey strayed away. He went to fetch it, I mounted the mule, and Ahmad, giving his donkey a kick to send it off, came and stood by my side. The moment had come.

Hamdi Effendi retraced his steps slowly and reflectively. From the first *nuance* of suspicion he had conceived when I was using my field-glasses so attentively, the horrid fear that was oppressing him had grown visibly in his countenance. Could any one, calling himself a human being, be capable of such turpitude? It seemed to him incredible. A prey to obvious emotion, he advanced upon us till I called on him to stop in a voice that brought him up all standing. I was afraid he might consider the moment of our turning our backs on him a suitable one for pistol practice, and so did not want him too close. "May God preserve you!" I cried. "Aren't you coming home?" said Hamdi pathetically. "No," said I, "we are going to Muscat. Give my salaams to the Vali. Come on, Ahmad!"

Ahmad seized my stirrup leather, the mule under most powerful persuasion bounded forward, and we were off. No shots followed: in his anxiety about the starched collar Hamdi Effendi had forgotten his revolver. When I last saw him he had given up trying to catch his donkey and was running for the gate.

Taking it in turns to ride and run we crossed the two miles or so of plough at a hand gallop, and reached the first foot-hills in a very short time, but so far as I was concerned more dead than alive. I was much out of condition, and let me here and now advise any of my readers who may ever find themselves under the necessity of doing this sort of thing not to wear chain armour. When the ground became too steep to ride, we parted with the poor old mule with a slash over the quarters that sent him galloping away. I glanced back: in Sanaa the bugles were sounding the retreat, and a single horseman was moving at speed across the plain, but not in our direction: no pursuit had yet started. Half running, half climbing, we stumbled upwards through the

fast-gathering darkness, and did not rest till we had reached a point on the steep hillside far above the plain, and inaccessible to mounted men. We stopped at last, and threw ourselves down behind a great boulder. I was more out of breath than I ever want to be again.

It was a cloudy night, and the moon was not rising till two a.m. We were about five miles from our *rendezvous*, but as I did not wish to arrive there much before midnight there was no hurry, though as we should have to proceed very cautiously and it is slow work making one's way across country in the dark, I decided to allow plenty of time. We waited therefore till it was quite dark; then, having discarded all light-coloured garments, we descended the hill and proceeded to move across the plain, halting frequently to take observations. I had managed to get a compass-bearing before dark. In spite of our precautions, we narrowly escaped capture. On a sudden we heard in the distance the neigh of a horse, and a little later human voices and the tramp of feet. We lay down flat and kept perfectly still. The patrol consisted of about thirty men, of whom half were mounted. They passed so close that we distinctly heard their conversation. "They are strangers," said one, "and so must keep to the road, or they will lose themselves." I heard a voice say something in Turkish which I thought I recognized as that of our old friend the Mudir.

At one time I thought they were going to ride right over us, for it happened that we had thrown ourselves down at the side of the road leading to Haddah, which they were following. The night was dark and we were dressed entirely in black, which saved us, no doubt, for Arabs generally have sharp eyes.

When all was quiet again we continued our march. In the distance we heard sounds that at this hour of the night were significant; dogs were barking all over the countryside. The barracks, I observed, were brilliantly illuminated, though it was long past the hour for "lights out." At last we found ourselves stumbling among grave-mounds and tombstones, and knew we were near our destination. After a few trials we discerned against the skyline the domed roof of the deserted chapel above the tank. I gave the agreed signal, but it remained

unanswered. Advancing cautiously for fear of a trap, we reached our *rendezvous*, only to find that there was no one there. Consternation at this discovery was dulled for the moment by the fact that we were consumed with thirst and that here was water. This little pond was used as a swimming bath by the young men of Sanaa : it was full of frogs, slime, and other abominations, and some time before, when we visited it with Hamdi, I had pointed with disgust to an old Arab woman who was drinking the water—which only shows how easy it is to be severe on sins that one has no temptation to commit one's self—for on this occasion I really thought we were going to drink it dry. Having slaked our thirst, we crouched under the wall and discussed the situation in whispers. I could not believe that Muslih had played us false ; he must be hiding close by. It was only after carefully reconnoitring all the ground in the vicinity that we came to realize the true state of the case, and how very awkwardly we were situated. With our guides to lead us, we should have been out of reach of the Turks before daybreak, but without them it was hopeless to go forward, for the best part of the night was already gone. Our best chance, though a poor one, seemed to be to hide somewhere before it got light and return the next night in case Muslih should come ; if he did not, then to strike eastwards by ourselves and chance it. Since however I considered the case well-nigh hopeless, it was not fair to keep Ahmad. Though the idea of being left alone there was by no means a pleasant one—in fact I dreaded parting with him—I could not in common decency keep him. I therefore advised him to go off and find his way back to his own country, which, alone, he would probably have little difficulty in doing. I offered him plenty of money and the pistol he was carrying for self-defence. Ahmad however gave me to understand that the sons of Abbas had never been in the habit of deserting their friends in the hour of danger, and that he proposed to see the thing through come what might. That we were in great peril admitted of no doubt. We knew the Turkish soldier well enough to be aware that taking prisoners is not congenial to him in any circumstances. I had now given the authorities what they

might choose to consider an excuse for proceeding to any length, even if the troops who found us gave them the chance, which we thought unlikely. The matter would probably be settled unofficially—if we got caught.

When the moon rose we went forward, making a wide detour so as not to pass too close under the citadel. It got very cold as the night wore on ; I had injured my right foot and Ahmad, having lost his sandals during our flight, had got his feet so badly cut walking over the rough, stony ground, that they could almost have followed us up by blood spoor. We made slow progress in consequence, and it was not till just before dawn that we came down into Shaoob. We chose for our hiding-place a group of buildings partially demolished by the Turkish shell fire, surrounded by a clump of small trees, and, dropping utterly exhausted, we slept till after sunrise, in spite of the cold.

What a difference daylight may make in the outlook ! Do things ever appear quite so bad in the sunshine as they may have seemed in the last half of a long night ? After all, I reflected, no game is lost till it is won, and as Ahmad remarked, nothing happens to us except what is foreordained. I had lost it was true all my instruments and other equipment. Well, so much the worse for the science of geography. We ourselves were still intact except for our feet, which would soon get right ; we had our weapons and plenty of money, and all Arabia lay before us.

Having no food, we were smoking a cigarette by way of breakfast, when I had an idea. I did not dare apply to Signor Caprotti for fear of compromising him, but there was one man in Sanaa beside him whom I knew I could trust. We would hold up a passer-by and send him with a message.

We crawled forward through the trees to a point from which we commanded the road, and waited till a likely-looking wayfarer passed. Our choice fell on an unsophisticated-looking old man with a bundle on his shoulder, who was trudging along toward Sanaa. We signalled to him from our hiding-place, and after some hesitation he came forward, reflecting perhaps that he carried nothing that would tempt the cupidity of even the least ambitious of robbers. I explained that we

were fugitives from the tyranny of the Turks and required to send a message to a friend in Sanaa. If he would carry it and not betray us I offered him as reward a sum of money that made him open his eyes in astonishment as I showed him the gold in my hand. The message was verbal, for I dared not write. "Tell him," I said, "that two friends of his who left Sanaa last night are in hiding in Shaoob. Let him send back, with you the messenger, before nightfall, some food, a pair of shoes, and a man who knows the way to Marib, and his and your reward shall be in this life as well as in that to come." The old man went off after we had shown him our *cache*—to which we then returned. A little after midday he came back bringing some food, some hot "Kishr" in an earthenware phial, and the shoes. Our friend he said wanted a *gage* before he would say or do anything more. We gave him a ring which Ahmad had bought from the other man, imploring him to use all despatch, for as he could see the matter was one of life and death. I paid him the reward and promised as much again if we had our guide before sundown. He hurried off, genuinely concerned, and Ahmad and I addressed ourselves to the lunch he had brought.

It was not a good lunch, nor was there much of it, but I have never enjoyed one more. We had eaten nothing for twenty-four hours and were once more very thirsty.

The day wore on, and as the old man did not return, I began to get more and more anxious. About five o'clock we had a bad scare. There was a sound of footsteps and voices close at hand, the brushwood parted, and two Arabs walking arm in arm passed within a few yards of our hiding-place. Worse still, they perceived us: but after the barest glance, they shouted the conventional salutation and passed on. I breathed again, thinking that they had taken us for ordinary picnickers, and in this I was wrong, for we were recognized.

The sun had just set when our old man returned, running, and with every mark of agitation. We gathered up our things the moment we saw him, for we knew at once that the crisis was at hand. He wasted no time in explanation. "I have got your guide," he panted, "but it is too late: you are discovered and the soldiers

are coming. Keep along among the trees, let them pass you and then dodge back. If you escape, I will await you after dark on the road opposite this place. God help you, my children "—and with that he made off. "The devil," said I in English, as we sprang to our feet. "La haula wala kowatah illa billahi!"* ejaculated the more pious Ahmad.

* "There is no power or strength except from God."

CHAPTER XVI

RECAPTURE AND RETURN

We moved rapidly through the trees, avoiding all clearings, and crouching low when necessary, till we came nearly to the end of them. Beyond the ground was open, without cover. The only thing now was to lie as close as possible and hope they would pass without seeing us—when we could take our old friend's advice and double back. It was dusk already, and in half an hour we should be safe. We lay down on the edge of a ring of trees surrounding an open space. Five minutes passed: "We'll do them yet," I thought. Soldiers emerged into the clearing, advancing in skirmishing order, with rifles at the ready, step by step, in the manner that one walks when following a wounded leopard in long grass. Ahmad turned to me—his eyes gleaming. "Those men," he whispered, "are not going to take us alive. The time has come," and he cocked his pistol.

I was in a difficulty, for though I thought as he did, yet we were not at war, there were others to be considered besides ourselves, and the first shot must not come from us. "Put the pistol down in front of you," I commanded him, "surrender if they offer it. If not, kill as many as you can, then run for it." Poor Ahmad! I doubt whether any of them would have been much the worse for it if he had fired—certainly not the one he aimed at.

On they came; we heard them among the trees on either side, and one man advancing from the front had already passed without seeing us. I almost thought we were going to escape, when there was a sudden outcry on the right and I turned to find myself looking down a rifle-barrel, the owner of which was shouting something in Turkish that I took to be the equivalent in that language for "Hands up!"

We held up our hands and then stood up, leaving our weapons on the ground. We were surrounded by about a dozen Turkish soldiers and twenty or more Arabs, all talking at once and wildly excited. Their first care was to tie our hands behind us and search us for weapons. Then one of them, clubbing his rifle, hit Ahmad a full drive in the chest that knocked him down. Several more then set on him, and I got much the same as he did. When they were tired of this exercise we were tied up still more securely and driven back to Sanaa. A sergeant who spoke Arabic and seemed to be in charge informed us that we were going to be hanged at the Bab-es-Sabah, where the gallows had been already erected. There was a certain improbability about this statement which did not strike me at the time: had the intention been to kill us they were hardly likely to trouble about a formal execution, and hangings usually took place at the Bab-el-Yemen. As it was, Ahmad somewhat bitterly criticized my leadership: we were going to be hanged, he said, like a pair of common thieves, instead of coming to our end fighting, in a manner which his father would have been proud to tell of. I had nothing to say, and personally was too knocked out of time to care very much about anything, while angry enough to regret bitterly not having fought while we had the chance. On the road, when we reached it, we encountered a large number of townspeople who had followed the soldiers out from Sanaa, and some more of the latter who, coming too late for the engagement, displayed their heroic spirit to the admiring civilians by pointing their rifles at us and spitting in our faces. At the gate we were lashed together so tightly that we could hardly move at first, and surrounded by a close cordon of the infantry, some of whom asked the sergeant if they should not fix bayonets. I suggested that they ought to wait for the artillery, a remark which, fortunately for me, the Turkish soldiers did not understand, though the Arabs did. The latter kept aloof throughout and took no part in ill-treating us: their attitude no doubt was dictated by prudence, for the Imam might gain the day after all and be disposed to avenge us.

In this manner we were driven through the streets of

Sanaa, sure enough, I observed, towards the Bab-es-Sabah, and not, as I had rather expected, to the "Hukumeh." When we got there it was nearly dark and we could see no sign of any gallows. A great crowd followed us, hoping to witness the execution. Among the spectators were many officers, none of whom made the slightest attempt to take command of the party or interfere in any way. Crossing the square we encountered the Mudir of police, who fell in behind us after a brief question to the sergeant. It was then that I realized our destination; we were being taken to Mohammed Ali's private house. "Be of good cheer," I said to Ahmad, "we may yet live to know old age."

We were halted in front of the door, and after some delay an officer came to the window and shouted some orders which resulted in our being unbound and led into the house. Ahmad remained below, and I was escorted upstairs and into the presence of the Vali. "I never expected to see you again," said His Excellency, eyeing me curiously. "You never would have," I answered angrily, "but for most evil chance." I told him that if he wanted me to talk I must have water first. He told an orderly to get some, and coffee as well. Reflecting no doubt that recriminations would serve no good purpose at this stage, and seeing perhaps that I had had about as much as I could stand, he contented himself with asking me, when I had drunk, where we had been going, shrugged his shoulders on receiving my answer, and continuing the conversation in French abruptly changed the subject. I understood that he was proposing to me a truce for the time being without prejudice to future proceedings, and I had the sense to accept the kind offer in the spirit it was proffered in.

I take pleasure in admitting that Mohammed Ali Pasha is one of the nicest-mannered men I have ever met. Our unspoken agreement concluded, he became on a sudden all kindness and courtesy. Dinner would soon be ready, he said, which no doubt I should be glad of.

We sat down about eight to this strange repast, the others being the officers of his personal staff and his son, a boy of about twelve years of age with long golden hair, whom my appearance seemed to interest greatly,

as well it might. I was wearing a loin-cloth belonging to Ahmad, a black jubbah and a steel shirt, while my face was stained bright blue. Mohammed Ali seems to have thought that I had done this on purpose, but, as a matter of fact, it was indigo from Ahmad's clothes that, with perspiration, was responsible for this surprising effect. Though it was by no means a bad dinner I could eat scarcely anything, though I enjoyed afterwards the first cigar I had smoked since leaving Europe. It was a most curious evening. The whole affair began to seem so utterly preposterous that I could hardly believe it to be a real experience. We sat in the ante-room for some time after dinner talking on a variety of subjects. Hearing that I had been in the Transvaal, the Vali was interested to know how I thought Turkish troops would have done there, and which seemed to me the more difficult problem, regarded from a military standpoint : the Transvaal or the Yemen. In my own opinion the conquest of the Yemen is an impossible undertaking—for the Turks at any rate—but I did not tell him so. I said that the Boers as adversaries must be held more formidable than the Arabs, owing to their better weapons and straighter shooting, but the Yemen was the more difficult country and the enemy were more numerous. The Turkish infantry would do well anywhere, but I did not think much of the training of the artillery. That, he replied, would improve in time : the Arabs, as I had seen, were very good in defence and fighting in the open, but suffered from lack of cohesion and discipline, and could seldom be made to attack a fortified place. The Boers, he understood, had no bayonets, which must have been a handicap to them, for the days of hand-to-hand fighting were not yet passed. Three weeks after this conversation his own advance guard was annihilated at Geezan, where nearly a thousand Turks fell under the daggers of the Idreesie's followers, who charged, so it was said, without firing a shot.

Discussing the late Boer war, we came to the question of the Press, and how valuable information sometimes reached the enemy through the indiscretion of newspaper correspondents. " Here," said the Vali, " we will allow neither war correspondents nor foreign attachés." I

asked him "Why not?" "Because," he replied, "we do not want what goes on here to be known in Europe." Yet there was nothing to conceal that I could see. The war, so far, had been carried on in a manner consistent with the most modern ideas on the subject. There had been no "atrocities"; on the contrary, the lenience of the Turks in some instances, in the case of the Millah for example, was excessive to the point of being reprehensible. The commander might justly be proud of the military efficiency of his army and the methodical manner in which the first stage of the campaign had been brought to a conclusion. The results of this anxiety for secrecy where there was no occasion for it might be seen in the Reuter's telegrams I had sent to Izzet Pasha, where it was stated among other odds and ends of news about the Yemen that 18,000 Turks had been killed at Sanaa alone!

The fact is that the Turks, beside their instinctive mistrust for strangers, have a morbid sensibility to criticism even when well meant. They don't like seeing themselves in print, and hate being made fun of. This book would figure in the "Index Expurgatorius" of the Minister for Education if for no other reason than because once or twice I have ventured on a joke at the expense of those in high places. Ridicule is a weapon they fear more than dynamite.

Some of the staff wanted to know where we had got to the night before, and if we had seen anything of the parties sent after us. I told them that one of these, which I fancied was commanded by the Mudir of Police, had nearly ridden over us. It seemed that I was right about this, and I felt sure the Vali was reflecting that with that blithering idiot in charge nothing better could be expected. They agreed that it was a good idea making the *rendezvous* so near the town: for it had not occurred to any one that we should not go straight on once we had got away. Mohammed Ali promised to lay hands on the traitor Muslih if he could.

Eventually the Mudir of police was summoned and given some instructions by the Vali, who then bowed to me. Returning his salute I followed the Mudir, who, in turn, handed me over to a captain of police in

command of about a dozen men drawn up outside. Ahmad was waiting between two guards, I was placed beside him, and we were marched off. The Mudir on this occasion allowed his resentment to get the better of his good manners, for he would not speak to me or even return my good-night. He had, I heard, fairly caught it from the Vali for letting us get away.

The crowd, disappointed of the promised sensation, had long since dispersed. As soon as we were out of sight of the Vali's house the captain of the escort came to my side. "You ought to have been half way to Shaharah by now," he said. "What went wrong?" I told him we weren't going to Shaharah, and explained, thereby wasting my breath. "Well," he said, "I'm glad we have got you back; there has been enough trouble as it is." I asked what he thought would be done to us. He had no idea: it would depend on what line Izzet Pasha took: they would probably wire to Stamboul for instructions. We were to be imprisoned in the Hukumeh, and not in the fort, which was full for one thing. "Full of what?" I asked, much surprised, for the prisoners, with the exception of the Millah, had been long since released. "The head men of the villages who were brought in last night, about one hundred of them: it was thought that you might have made arrangements with some of them to help you." "Heavens!" I said, "I knew the Vali would not like it, but I had no idea he would take all that trouble about me." "Indeed he did," answered the captain, "and more. No one slept in Sanaa last night: the whole garrison was out looking for you, and expeditions have been sent to Khaulan and many other places." I began to feel like the lady who, oversleeping herself on a certain occasion, awoke to find herself infamous.

This officer, a Circassian, had been employed in shadowing us in Hodeidah, and was the first to suspect that we had departed. He had later followed us up to Sanaa and had arrived at Matinah just in time to take part in the defence of that place.

At the Hukumeh I found that a room generally used as an office had been cleared for my accommodation. It contained a settee and a couple of chairs. Ahmad

was confined in the common guard-room the other side of the passage and fared in this matter better than I did, for he had other malefactors, beside the Arab gendarmes, for company during the term of our incarceration. He and I were not allowed to have any further communication with one another.

The captain and some other police officers stayed with me while, at my request, a man was sent to my house to bring blankets. The house had been taken over by the Sheria * court. Suleiman was imprisoned in the fort. I asked after Hamdi Effendi and was told he also was in prison. They were very anxious to know exactly what he had done when we escaped. "He did nothing," I said; "what could he do?" "Did not he shoot at you?" asked the captain. "No," I said, "he did not." This seemed to amuse them greatly: the point of the joke and the explanation of several other matters may best be given by quoting the statement made by Sergeant-Major M., a Yemen Arab belonging to the corps of gendarmerie, to the Consul and myself at Hodeidah.

He was acting as orderly to the Vali on the night of our escape from Sanaa. The policeman who was with us (Hamdi Effendi) lost his head after we rode away from him. He did not give the alarm at once, but returned first to his house to get his revolver, which he had forgotten that day. He then burst in upon the Vali, who was having dinner, and said that we had escaped at sundown and that he had fired six shots at us, but missed. It was by this time nearly eight o'clock, and an examination of his revolver disclosed the fact that not only had it not been fired, but was broken, which he explained by saying that the last shot had blown it open. He was told that if we were not captured within forty-eight hours he would be hanged, and in the meantime he was imprisoned in the Hukumeh along with most of the other police who had been told off to guard us; they were in irons till we were retaken. He did not know if it were true that the Mudir was under arrest, but he was sent with one of the patrols. The official idea was that

* The Sheria, *i.e.* the Moslem religious law, is the only legal code in force in the Yemen.

I had arranged with the Imam for a party to meet me during the night between Sanaa and Haddah, or else was making for Khaulan. For this reason the parties sent in pursuit were strong enough to deal with any force they were likely to encounter. Their instructions were to "take us alive if possible." No one in Sanaa, however, expected to see us again, dead or alive, and when the patrols began to return empty-handed the following day no one doubted but that we were safely with the Imam.

When we were captured twenty-four hours later within half a mile of Sanaa, no one knew what to think. A great number of the officers, Izzet Pasha among them, concluded that their suspicions were unfounded after all. Others, including the Vali, still clung to the spy idea, and many wanted to court-martial us. Izzet Pasha insisted on referring to Stamboul for instructions, and the order came that we were to be returned to Hodeidah forthwith. The soldiers who had ill-treated us were all imprisoned directly Izzet Pasha heard what had happened.

This account of what happened was confirmed in all essential particulars by what we heard both before and after it was given. It explained what had puzzled Ahmad and myself, namely the delay in starting the pursuit and the fact that they made no attempt to "drive" for us.

. . . . . .

I will pass over the time we spent in prison in as few words as possible. We were searched and relieved of all papers, among them the "Turkish" passport I had used on the Mecca journey. My shirt of mail, which was taken, was destined to figure among the other "exhibits." I was very closely guarded: a sentry with fixed bayonet guarded the door and another the window, which was strongly barred. We were allowed to order what food we required from the "steward," who got it from the market, and, as I had plenty of money, we suffered no hardship in this respect. We were not allowed table knives or even a safety razor, for fear, so they told us, that we might commit suicide. This looked ominous.

For many days I was doubtful as to the fate in store for us. I applied at once for leave to telegraph to the

Consul to inform him of our situation, but it was refused on the ground that he had already been fully informed. As time passed and no communication from him reached me, I got rather depressed. I knew that we could not legally be tried, even by court-martial, unless he or his representative were present, and I began to think he must be coming up to Sanaa himself for that purpose. One day when I got them with great difficulty to take us to the public bath, of which we were much in need, we overheard a certain Colonel Riza Bey say that we were going to be tried and would certainly be hanged, which, though I did not believe it, was still rather unpleasant. Even sentenced prisoners in chains are taken to the "Hamam" in places like Sanaa.

The day after our capture I was examined by a police officer, who asked a long series of questions, which he took down with my answers to them. They told me that this examination was strictly speaking irregular in the absence of the Consular dragoman, but this formality might be dispensed with in my case on account of my knowledge of Arabic. I made no objection till I found that I was expected to sign a document written in Turkish. Most of the questions put to me were quite irrelevant. One of them was, "Who was William the Conqueror?" It arose from the difficulty that even educated Turks find in comprehending our system of family names.

With Ahmad it was otherwise. Every effort was made to get him to turn "Sultan's evidence." The Mudir himself several times cross-examined him, promising safety and reward if he would tell all he knew. Ahmad, of course, stuck to it that we were going to Marib, and had nothing to do with the Imam.

On one occasion I was escorted to my late residence, to take over from the Sheria court the property I had left there. I found, needless to say, that many things of value had disappeared. After everything that could be used as a weapon had been removed, I was allowed to send the rest of my belongings to my cell at the Hukumeh. Among the things that escaped the vigilance of the police on this occasion were a small case of surgical instruments and a four-ounce bottle of chloroform. The former came in very handy, as I dislike eating meat with-

out a knife, and the latter might well have been useful for other than suicidal purposes.

After some days the Mudir came in to see me, shook hands and offered me a cigarette. We could not converse with one another, as I know very little Turkish, but I gathered that he wished to make it up. Perhaps he considered that the inconveniences he himself had suffered were atoned for by the beating we had received. For this, by the way, except for bruises, we were little the worse, thanks in my case to the much-abused mail shirt. Ahmad, like most Arabs, weighs nothing and seems made of steel rope and india-rubber.

Hamdi Effendi was unchained when we were taken and put under ordinary arrest. He was sent to spend some time in the guard-room, which was really rather a harsh measure, for Ahmad had quite recovered his usual spirits. Unluckily for Hamdi he had been told of the broken pistol, and that incident, with that of the now famous starched collar, was indeed good material for him to work on. Poor Hamdi! when I next saw him he seemed to have lost several stone in weight. During the time that we were at large he had vowed the sacrifice of several sheep if he were delivered; and they were duly offered up before we left Sanaa.

On some days I was visited for a short time by the Mudir or one of the police officers, on others I saw no one except the steward who brought the food. When we had been thus confined for about ten days, all the restrictions were suddenly relaxed. This I concluded to be due either to action taken by the Consul or orders from Stamboul. The Vali, I was pleased to hear, had started for Hodeidah with a large force. I was pleased because I felt sure that had they intended any serious proceedings against us he would not have been allowed to go.

I was told that I might go out for exercise if I liked, and, as owing to my foot having suppurated I could not walk, I was allowed to ride. My escort, a police officer, kept very close, and wore in a conspicuous position the instrument that Hamdi had so unwisely left at home on a memorable occasion. We did not go anywhere near the gates.

In the town I met a certain Colonel Fattah Bey whose

acquaintance I had made during the first few days of my stay in Sanaa. He was commandant of the engineers in the Yemen, and had been educated in Germany. Always genial, he had never failed to stop and speak to me, even during the siege, when no one else dared to. I was glad to find that recent events had not forfeited for me his good opinion—in fact, rather the reverse it seemed, for on this occasion he was positively hilarious. "When are you going back?" he asked. "I expect you know more about that than I do," I responded. Dropping his voice, with a glare at my escort, who had halted at a respectful distance, "You're all right," he said; "I can tell you that."

The next day I received a visit from Major Hartfi Bey, the commandant of gendarmerie, who had been sent with a force to Khaulan in pursuit of us, and had just returned. I remembered him at once, for he had been with us on board the "Missieh" from Suez to Hodeidah. He laughed heartily at my account of our escape. "You really do deserve to get something for giving us all this trouble," he remarked, "and now they say you were not going to Shaharah after all." I explained for the hundredth time. "You have indeed a strange way of amusing yourself," he reflected, and turned to translate to another officer he had brought with him, who had also, it seemed, commanded a patrol that night. The latter, one of the old school, said nothing, and sat gazing stolidly at the strange phenomenon. It is annoying to feel that one is exchanging the reputation of a spy for that of a lunatic; but this was the most that my efforts ever succeeded in accomplishing with the Turks.

Finally, towards the end of the second week of our imprisonment, the Mudir came one day with the announcement that we were to start for Hodeidah the following day, and he himself was going to escort us. As a matter of fact I first heard the good news from the steward, who told me that a telegram had come about us the night before. It is wonderful how in Turkish countries information supposed to be secret leaks out. A cipher message comes for an official, and the whole town knows its contents an hour later.

I was not destined to leave Sanaa without being

given yet another object-lesson in their comic-opera methods of doing business. Muslih, I must explain, had been arrested shortly after our recapture, but though I had been asked to identify him I had not been told what it was intended to do with him. Whether he was to give evidence against me, or I against him, I did not know. I had refused to make any statement whatsoever concerning any dealings I might or might not have had with others in Sanaa, merely shrugging my shoulders in reply to questions on the subject, but as regards this man I had no objection to stating what I knew of him because after his treacherous conduct he deserved no consideration, and moreover the truth tended to exculpate both of us from the graver charge of being in league with the enemy. In consequence of this reticence the authorities had not known what part exactly Sulieman the cook had played in the business, and had been alternately imprisoning and releasing him. When the Mudir had gone two Arab scribes came in, one of whom told me that he was the clerk of the Kadhi's court, and had come to take down my "statement of evidence" concerning Muslih, as I should not be present to bear witness at his trial. I made the required statement, which was duly signed, sealed, and witnessed. They then retired to do the like with Ahmad, who, in the matter of giving information to the police, had adopted exactly the same attitude as I had myself.

Towards evening, when busy packing what remained of my property into saddle bags, in preparation for our departure on the morrow, there was a clash of grounded arms without, the door opened, and a policeman entered and informed me that I was about to appear before the Kadhi. "More trouble," I thought. I was escorted to the room in the same building that served as a court—in view of my own experience we will not describe it as a court of justice. At one end, behind a green baize table laden with ponderous-looking books and equally formidable writing materials, sat the Kadhi himself—a fine old man, with fierce eyes and a long white beard, dressed in the elegant costume of the Hedjaz, with an enormous white turban. His appearance was enough to strike terror into the heart of any evil-doer, and I

mentally ran over the offences against the religious law of which I had lately been guilty. I hoped he had not heard of our hashish-smoking, or discovered the true nature of the liquid which Signor Caprotti had been sending me for the last few days in a sparklet siphon, ingenuously representing to the authorities that it was lemonade. The prescribed punishment for these offences, so far as I could recollect, was forty lashes, but being a "Hagi" I might get more. This terrible man had two assessors beside him on the bench. I was placed on a chair beside Ahmad, who had preceded me under a strong guard, and was sitting there regarding the majesty of the law with a becomingly demure expression. There were a lot of people in court talking and laughing, and on a chair placed opposite to us I was astonished to perceive that scoundrel Muslih, who was interjecting the words "Allahu Akbar" (God is great) with a monotonous regularity only equalled by their eternal truth and utter irrelevance.

Commanding silence in a voice of thunder, to which no one paid the slightest attention, the Kadhi directed the statement of claim to be read. The clerk of the court arose thereupon and began to read aloud the statement of evidence I had made that morning. Overcoming with a great effort my innate respect for all forms of constituted authority, courts of law in especial, I rose to a point of order, and, bidding the clerk be silent, asked the Kadhi what the case he was trying was about. He obligingly informed me that it was a civil action, in which Ahmad and I, the plaintiffs, were suing Muslih, the defendant, for the return of certain articles that it was alleged we had handed over to him. "But, O Judge of the judges," I said, "I have no intention of bringing such an action; and could not if I would, for, as your presence is aware, we are foreign subjects."

"Ya walad," said the presence, with more benignance than politeness, "'tis by order of the Vali. Let the reading proceed."

When the "claims" had been recited the Kadhi called for the witnesses, and at this point a subaltern of the gendarmerie, who said he was acting for us, got up and announced that there weren't any: because Ahmad and

myself, as plaintiffs, could not give evidence in our own case, and the only other witness, Suleiman, my late cook, had been released from prison the day before, and could not now be found. He had stated, however, previous to his release that he knew nothing whatever about it, and had never in his life set eyes on Muslih the defendant. "Of small moment is his absence," observed the Kadhi, "since the Holy Sheria does not permit the evidence of a servant to be accepted in such a case." At this point I again interrupted, pointing out that as the plaintiffs did not want to bring the action, and there were no witnesses even if they did, there seemed little use in having a trial at all—especially as the whole proceedings were utterly illegal from start to finish.

After reflection the Kadhi announced that he would defer further consideration of this case pending more explicit information concerning it, and, no doubt, though he did not say so, pending more explicit instructions as to the decision he was expected to arrive at.

I returned to my cell to find to my delight no less a person than Signor Caprotti awaiting me. For some days past he had been allowed to send me things, food and drink (not lemonade), but I had received no direct communication from him. That evening, however, being informed of what was happening, he had obtained permission to see me. After a short conversation he asked the officer of police who was present at our interview whether there was any chance of my being allowed to dine with him. The officer did not think so, but would apply to the Mudir. I then offered to give parole for the evening if this favour were accorded. After a very long delay, due to the Mudir in turn having to apply to the acting Vali, permission was granted subject to the reservation that an officer should be with me throughout. This tacit refusal of my parole annoyed me, for I had intended to offer it for the journey down to the coast, which would have saved much trouble to both sides. I put down this insult on the debit side of a long account to be settled some day, Inshallah, and in the meantime went to supper with Signor Caprotti, policeman and all. We judged it wiser—for this man knew something, at any rate, of the language—to avoid

all mention of recent occurrences, but we had an excellent supper and parted late at night, hoping to meet again in more pleasant conditions.

We left Sanaa at dawn the next day and I was almost as glad to see the last of the place as I had been to catch first sight of it. Our party consisted of the Mudir, an officer of the police, Hamdi Effendi, and about half-a-dozen Arab riflemen, all mounted. We started with an infantry escort of about fifty men, but this varied in strength. I was puzzled to know why they were taking Hamdi Effendi, who, though much subdued, seemed to be no longer under arrest. I had done my best for him, offering to make oath if necessary that he was not suborned.

Ahmad and I were not tied up in any way even at night, as the steward at the Hukumeh, usually well informed, had thought that we should be. We were of course unarmed. The gendarme officer was wearing my sword and revolver, which would, he told me, be handed over to the Consul in Hodeidah, together with the pistol and dagger found on Ahmad, which were also in safe keeping. The soldiers who made us prisoners had plundered us of all we were carrying with the exception of the money, which they failed to discover. A curious thing happened in this connection : the weapons, as evidence against us, were duly handed over to the authorities, and the other things disappeared equally as a matter of course, with two exceptions, my compass, which nobody would have known how to use, and a half-chronometer watch which, judging I suppose by its size and absence of decoration, they concluded to be of little value. It was worth several times as much as all the things they did take put together.

At Sook-el-Khamis, where we passed the first night, tents were pitched for us in the enclosure before the house of the commandant. We thus to some extent escaped the vermin, which I had been rather dreading. The Mudir and I slept in one tent, Ahmad and the gendarme in the other. We had a sentry apiece before the door, and a light was kept burning all night. Every time the sentries were relieved I was awakened so that the one coming on duty might assure himself that I was really

there when he took over. They evidently did not mean to let us get away this time, and I was vain enough to feel rather pleased at the extreme precautions considered necessary to prevent it.

The veneer of Western civilization that deceives the superficial observer as to the true character of the modern Turks wears thin in some conditions. This Mudir was the chief of all the police in the Yemen and one of the high officials of the province : he ranked, I believe, immediately after a Lieutenant-Governor. Yet no arrangements were made for his accommodation on the road. At most of the places we stopped at the ordinary rest-house. He had no servant and no cook. We set out from Sanaa with a few pounds of biscuits, some tea, and some tins of sardines. Fortunately Ahmad's accomplishments as a *chef* are not to be despised, and at Menakha I got them to let him buy a cooking-pot and the necessary materials. Thenceforward we fared better : Ahmad prepared baked meat and rice in an earthenware pot, and there sat down to the repast on one occasion at the same time the Mudir himself, the lieutenant of gendarmerie (a commissioned officer), Hamdi Effendi, an Arab sergeant-major, a private soldier, and Ahmad and myself, the prisoners, who were not allowed knives to eat with !

Sometimes they go to the opposite extreme : I have known a general who would not allow his staff officers to sit down in his presence.

I liked the Mudir, who was always civil and did his best to make the journey as pleasant for me as the peculiar circumstances would allow. I was not the first, it seemed, to whom his duty had compelled him to act harshly when his inclinations were all the other way. He instanced a German anarchist who had come to Stamboul to assassinate Abdul Hamid, and whose arrest by himself, the Mudir, had been one of the successes that had brought him to the front of his profession. This anarchist was a most charming companion, he assured me, and I felt pleased at the implied compliment, which was evidently none the less sincere for being a little invidious.

As a matter of fact I think he mistook his vocation when he became a policeman. It is a striking perversity

of human nature that people always seem to want to do the things for which they have the least natural aptitude. How often one sees the priest who was obviously intended by Providence for a soldier, and vice versa. Force of circumstances, no doubt, is often responsible for this, but more often still is it due to lack of self-appreciation. This particular man, the Mudir of police, belonged to the type of good-tempered, easy-going people that it is almost impossible to annoy, and that has a perfect genius for making a mess of the simplest things. I believe that I myself am about the only person who has ever succeeded in making him really angry, and even I was quite forgiven long before we parted. He was fond of gardening, and a little time before had got a patent pump out from Europe for irrigation purposes. Naturally, in putting it together he had managed to hurt his hand. On the way down I dressed it for him with "Pond's Extract." This touching episode was quoted by the Sublime Porte as proving the good relations existing between us. I am glad to hear he was cured: had he got tetanus and died, they would certainly have said I poisoned him.

Speaking of doctoring, I may remark that for the traveller in Arabia, even more than elsewhere, it is an invaluable accomplishment. The Arabs regard the doctor with great reverence, more especially if he comes from the land of marvels, "Auroba," and is furnished with an imposing array of books and bright instruments. The simplest surgical operation seems to them something far more wonderful than does an aeroplane. The traveller who professes the healing art may count on a welcome where otherwise he would meet with hostility. "Yes, but what happens when your cases go wrong?" the non-professional reader may well ask. "Does not that lead to trouble?" By no means. The Arabian doctor slightly varies a famous *mot*: "I treated him," he says, "and God killed him!"

On this journey my knowledge of doctoring was, I must admit, of little use. During the siege the imprisoning of every one who came to my house prevented my being consulted. No practice can be expected to stand that sort of thing.

I had only one patient, as a matter of fact ; the quartermaster of an infantry regiment who had swallowed his false teeth. As I could find no trace of them in the œsophagus and did not consider that gastrotomy would be "either equitable or desirable," as they say in the Foreign Office, I contented myself with advising him to get a new set. After the siege I had several more who, though I was always careful to explain that I was not qualified, preferred coming to me to going to the hospital or consulting the Turkish doctors, because I was an Englishman ; that *ipso facto* was a qualification sufficient for them.

The Turkish medical service is not good, but the Turks, when properly trained, make good doctors and so do the Arabs. Once in Syria I saw an Arab perform one of the major operations of surgery. His practical knowledge of the subject had been gained by six months spent in a Vienna hospital, but, as he naively admitted, his difficulty in understanding German had prevented his profiting by this experience to the extent he ought to have done. Otherwise he had learned entirely from books, and had got a degree—of sorts !

His anæsthetist, a youth in a "Kuftan" which had seen better days, had a way of administering chloroform that was alarming, to say the least of it. There were about a dozen privileged spectators in the room itself, and a large crowd at the window, but this surgeon did not suffer from stage fright, or any other sort, I fancy. When all was ready he pronounced the name of God, and started operating with a rapidity and seeming skill that surprised me. The patient was a boy about fourteen years of age, and the operation was for the radical cure of congenital inguinal hernia. At the end there seemed no reason why it should not be successful. The surgeon afterwards took me round his hospital—which he had built himself—and showed me his other cases. Considering the conditions his results were truly astonishing. I believe he would undertake anything short of capital amputation, and that, like all true Arabs, he looks forward to achieving in the next war.

At Menakha we stayed at the "Kuloob," a small house built for the accommodation of official travellers, and

connected in some obscure way with Freemasonry. Not being a freemason myself I have been much puzzled by certain things concerning the brotherhood in the East, and should be glad of information on the following points. What is the difference between freemasonry in England and in Turkey ? The latter seems to be more a political association than anything else. Would an English mason be admitted to a Turkish lodge—in a place like Sanaa for instance ? If it is a fact, as I have heard stated by an Englishman, that there are many freemasons among the Bedou Arabs, how has this come about, and why do not the Turkish freemasons recognize them as such ?

Soon after our arrival we were visited by the Herzegovinian commandant, a noted character, the gendarme told me, famous for his courage and ferocity as well as for the number of battles in which he had been engaged. He looked it too : a regular soldier of fortune, such as flourished in days gone by when all the world was at war. He had enormous moustaches and a countenance dry and brown as the high veld in August, a voice like a fog-horn, and a fine assortment of strange oaths in several languages. He and the Mudir were evidently old friends, and I myself was known to him by reputation —so it seemed.

He insisted that we must all come to dinner with him, and when the Mudir at last made him understand that this was impossible, on my account, the commandant was in no wise disconcerted. Like Mohammed and the mountain, if we would not come to his dinner, he and the dinner would come to us. At sundown, after we had washed and changed our clothes, sure enough he appeared, with another Kaimakam (colonel), followed by a couple of orderlies carrying a table, glasses, and several bottles bearing a well-known label, which they set before us. Ahmad was asked to make one of the *convives*, but I did not wish him to add a taste for absinthe to his other vicious propensities, and sent him to keep company with Hamdi and the gendarmerie subaltern, who, not receiving the honour of an invitation, sat on a couch at the other end of the room, and watched the debauch that ensued with hungry eyes. " You know

this stuff ? " said the commandant to me as he filled the glasses. " Ha ! I thought so. Just got it out ! He doesn't," with a wink at the Mudir ; " we'll make the —— drunk." I said I thought it was a very good idea.

The commandant was a sportsman of a type rare in these degenerate days. He kept us in fits of laughter, and only checked his flow of anecdotes to upbraid the Mudir and myself, who drank, he said, like a pair of women. We had to confess our inability to keep pace with him, but we were doing our best. By the time dinner came the Mudir of police was three sheets in the wind, and it must be confessed that the author of this book was not in a condition to observe the lunar distance with any degree of accuracy. The dinner consisted, as usual with the " uneuropeanized " Turks, of a great number of courses served in rapid succession. The food is very good, but one is never given time to eat it. This habit of bolting food is very general in the East : the Arabs are nearly as bad as the Turks in this respect. My brother and I were once the guests of honour at a dinner party given by a rich Syrian merchant in Tripoli. There was an enormous spread, such things as lambs roasted whole figuring among the more important dishes : yet the whole thing was over in less than ten minutes, and we were herded into another room where some huge jam tarts, each about the size of a sponge bath, awaited our attentions.

The commandant came from that part of Herzegovina which was " jumped " by Austria in 1908. He showed me the new stamps on letters he had just received from home, and we agreed that this matter could only properly be argued out under the walls of Vienna. When our hosts at last took their departure I felt, for once, almost grateful to the Mudir for the excessive prudence which had prevented his allowing them to entertain us in their own quarters.

We were up before daylight, but not before the commandant, whom we found, as fresh as a daisy, strolling about in the grey dawn, and cracking jokes with the Arabs, with whom he was a great favourite, as they were saddling up. He had brought us a couple of bottles of the absinthe to see us to the coast. " He thought it was like mastic ! " said he of the Mudir, who was looking depressed. We

exchanged addresses before parting, and he promised to let me know when there was a prospect of anything amusing in Herzegovina.

On the way down we saw many signs of the ravages of war, villages ruined by the shell fire, houses deserted, and a plentiful crop of new-looking graves. The road was very strongly held: our escort, which was furnished by the blockhouse line, was changed every few miles. As we passed each post a bugle-call signalled to the next that a party was on the road, and indicated by a series of short blasts the number of persons composing it. There was an examining post on the road near Menakha to ascertain the names and descriptions of all travellers before they were allowed to enter the town.

We rode by night from Hageilah to Bagil, and halted the whole day at the latter place. Here the Mudir received an official visit from the commandant, a "Young Turk" of the most approved type (though he was actually an Arab), dressed in a very smart khaki uniform with much gold lace and white kid gloves. He was accompanied by a staff officer of the same description. Being awakened by Hamdi in order to be introduced, I hastened to put on a turban and jubbah, for as it was very hot and a dust-storm was blowing I was scantily attired: but this coquetry he assured me was quite out of place, and when I saw the Mudir I thought so too. He was receiving his visitors dressed in a white cotton nightgown, which, as he had mislaid his tarboosh and had not shaved since we left Sanaa, made him look exactly like a pantomime ghost.

We started at sundown for the ride through the Tehama and reached Hodeidah early the following morning. Ahmad made me eat Kat, which he said was invaluable on a night march owing to its anti-soporific properties. It certainly did keep me awake, but how far that effect was attributable to the drug itself and how far to the pain of dyspepsia it induced, and the exertion of chewing the beastly stuff, is open to question.

We rode into the town of Hodeidah at early dawn on June 9. Although the expedition which ended here had been an absolute failure, had accomplished nothing whatever, cost a great deal, and entailed a fearful waste of time, at any rate, I reflected, we had had a run for our money.

FINIS

We were kept for several hours in the "Seraya." I had made no inquiry as to what it was proposed to do with us in Hodeidah, and though I expected that we should be handed over to the Consul eventually, I was prepared to be confined for a short time. From what I knew of the Consul I did not think that confinement was likely to be of long duration, and I was right, for about ten o'clock the dragoman of the Consulate arrived in a great hurry to demand our instant release. Treating what the Mudir and some other officers were saying about a receipt as so much bosh, which it was, he pushed me out of the Seraya by main force, despite their indignant expostulations: and that was the last I saw of them. A few minutes later I was receiving the warmest welcome from Dr. Richardson, who had heard of our arrival only just before.

Not even regret for the ignominious failure of my expedition could detract from the pleasure I felt at finding myself once more beneath his most hospitable roof. For the first time for six months was talking my own language to a fellow-countryman, and to one, moreover, with whom knowledge made for sympathy. An Arabian proverb says, "Two blessings are never appreciated till they depart: health and safety."

The Consul listened to my story with astonishment and growing indignation. He had duly received my urgent telegram reporting the Vali's attempt to turn me out, and had made haste to answer, telling me not to leave Sanaa, and telegraphing at the same time to the Vali to know what he meant by it. He had been rather puzzled by the date of my wire and had not seen how I could get the answer in time. This my story explained. The next communication he had received had been a telegram from the Vali, saying I had escaped,

and this had been followed in twenty-four hours by another, saying that I had been discovered hiding in Shaoob, and stating that various things, such as the fact of my wearing chain armour and being stained with indigo, had confirmed all his suspicions concerning me.

The Consul, under the impression that I was once more back in my house in Sanaa, had not answered this despatch by telegraph, but was waiting to hear details from myself. As time passed and no letter from me arrived, he had begun to get anxious. Some curious rumours reached his ears, and as it was evident that something mysterious was taking place, he had decided to send the dragoman up to Sanaa to investigate. Our arrival in Hodeidah was in time to save him this trouble : the first notification he had had of it had been a request from the Mutassarif that he would give a receipt for two *soi disant* British subjects who had been sent down from the interior.

His Britannic Majesty's representative in Hodeidah is not a man accustomed to put up with nonsense from any one, least of all from Turks, old or young. My own inclinations were to let the matter rest here. I had enough to be thankful for in returning alive : and I could always try again from somewhere else. To make a fuss now would, I thought, only be creating difficulties for myself in the future. The Consul, however, declined to consider the matter in this light, and pointed out that it was not a question of my personal convenience, but of his duty to the country. The capitulations had been violated in a dozen different ways, he himself had been ignored, his correspondence tampered with, and his assertions discredited in a manner that amounted to an insult to the office he held. As for our treatment after recapture, it would be most harmful to British prestige in this part of the world to allow so gross an outrage on any British subject to pass without exacting the fullest reparation : while, with an Englishman in question, the affair assumed a very serious aspect indeed.

I cannot describe what followed in detail, because it might be considered that the contents of certain documents on which I was asked to make observations should be treated by me as confidential. Any one curious on

the subject should apply to the Foreign Office. The Consul sent a cablegram to the Embassy at Constantinople, in which he stated the facts of the case and suggested, I believe, a strong line of action. In some extraordinary manner a garbled version of this report found its way into the Press a few days later. An explanation of this incident, kindly vouchsafed by the Foreign Office, will be found in the appendix.

Ahmad and I made sworn statements, which are merely *résumés* of the story I have related here. I stayed in Hodeidah until it was certain that our presence as witnesses would not be required. There was no lack of evidence to support our statements: quite half the population of Sanaa were eye-witnesses to most of the facts alleged. Indeed the truth of these statements was never seriously challenged. The Turkish authorities contented themselves with denying everything without discussion, which is merely the Turkish way of saying that you can "go to blazes." Mohammed Ali went so far as to say he did not know I was an Englishman, and even the ingenuity of our own Foreign Office has so far failed to find justification for this "possibly disingenuous" statement. I, personally, have no hesitation whatever in characterizing it as a "terminological inexactitude."

. . . . .

Hodeidah is not the most pleasant place in the world to spend the month of June. A strong breeze blew most days, which rendered the heat less oppressive, but the dampness at this season is extreme. Another serious cholera epidemic broke out about this time and caused great mortality in the town and among the troops; and the disaster of Geezan, which took place soon after my arrival, still further embarrassed the situation. The authorities took no measures to cope with the epidemic beyond directing special prayers to be said in the mosques and issuing a belated order prohibiting the sale of fruit in the market.

Despite these drawbacks, thanks to the hospitality of Dr. Richardson, I much enjoyed the three weeks I spent there. The day of the coronation was made the occasion of great festivities. In the morning the Consul held an official reception, to which came in turn the various classes of the community: the Turkish

officials, the foreign Consuls, the principal merchants, and so forth. The poor of Hodeidah were then fed, to the number of about 2,000. Great trays of meat and rice were placed in the road outside the Consulate, from which traffic was temporarily diverted. In the afternoon the Consul entertained the British-Indian merchants to tea at the tennis court, the Consulate was illuminated at night, and, as the dragoman put it in his report to the local paper, "the sounds of rejoicing continued to a late hour." This paper is published in Sanaa, and like all newspapers in Turkish provinces contains practically no news. Most of it is taken up with the movements of Turkish officials, unreliable accounts of Turkish victories, and homilies to the Ashkeya (the miserable ones) *i.e.* the rebels.

I saw a good deal of the Italian Consul-General during this period. He was still excited about the Sambook affair and the misdeeds of "that bad man" Mohammed Ali. We decided that it was proper to demand his head on a charger as a preliminary to all further negotiations. A report had been started during the siege that Caprotti and I had been imprisoned, some said executed, by the Turks for having communication with the enemy. This story had reached Italy, not England, fortunately, and had been the subject of questions in the Italian Parliament.

Before I left there was another row, over a Danish missionary this time. This gentleman belonged to the inoffensive class of missionaries who do not go in for active evangelizing but try to do good by selling books. He had come to Hodeidah for that purpose, had opened a shop, and was doing a brisk business. Bibles in especial seemed to be selling like hot cakes, but as he was selling them below cost price, I inclined to an explanation of this fact rather different from the one he favoured. The Arab of these parts buys his books on the same principle as his bread: that is to say, size and weight in proportion to price influence his choice. However, he had a lot of other books beside the Bible: school books, works on geography, mathematics, and so on, all authorized to be sold in the Turkish Empire by the Minister of Education, and bearing the official *cachet*.

Now the Turk hates people who sell books: he would almost rather you sold machine guns. However innocent they may appear, it is difficult to know for certain that they contain nothing seditious—especially when one can't read them. Beside which, he has a theory concerning the desirability of educating "subject races" that finds adherents in other countries beside Turkey. Among the books this missionary was selling was a little paper-backed pamphlet intended for children at the age when attractive illustrations act as a carminative for the indigestible matter in the text. This book had on the cover a picture of a man sitting on a horse, and worse still, holding a gun! It was sufficient: the shop was closed by the "police meister," as the missionary called him.

Unfortunately for the "police meister," the Mutassarif, and the other idiots responsible, this missionary had British protection. I am afraid to specify, for fear of being disbelieved, in how short a time his shop was opened again by the Consular dragoman and a couple of kavasses. Then began a row, in which of course the authorities got the worst of it, and had to climb down. The only argument they adduced in support of their high-handed action was that the Arabs were too ignorant to be trusted with books. "But," said the Consul, the missionary, and every one else in Hodeidah not being a Turkish official, "*voici une raison de plus.*"

. . . . .

This narrative may well end with what there is to be told concerning some of the people who figure in it, in whose fate the reader may perhaps be interested. The Consul remains at his post in Hodeidah, which at the time of writing is blockaded by Italian warships. The Italian Consul-General left with much dignified ceremonial at the outbreak of hostilities: the ill feeling to which the Sambook affair gave rise will, it may be hoped, disappear in the presence of a larger issue. Signor Caprotti left for Italy before the outbreak of war. Muslih was set at liberty (I am informed that I lost my "action" against him), and so likewise were Suleiman and the others implicated. So far as I know no one actually came to harm over the business.

Ahmad, who has a passion for killing things, had confided to me early in our acquaintance that his great ambition in life was to shoot a lion. I failed to arrange this for him, but together we shot many strange beasts, among them a couple of rhino and quite a nice buffalo, the true father of horns as he called it, besides being charged by another in thick bush, which, though he stopped it with a very pretty shot at close quarters, ultimately got away.

Ahmad came to the conclusion that big-game shooting on the Athi river, though less sensational, was better sport on the whole than being hunted one's self by the Turkish patrols across the plain of Sanaa. That perhaps was almost too exciting.

APPENDIX

We arrived at Hodeidah on June 9th. The British Vice-Consul sent a cipher telegram reporting the facts of the case to the Embassy at Constantinople on June 11th. The two following notices appeared in the *Times*:—

The *Times*, Friday, June 16, 1911 :—

"BRITISH EXPLORER ARRESTED IN ARABIA

"ILL-TREATMENT BY TURKISH OFFICIALS

"(From our own Correspondent)

"Constantinople,
"*June* 15.

"The British Embassy has been informed that Mr. Wavell, the British explorer, who, after a journey in East Africa, visited Yemen, with the object of exploring the interior, has been arrested by the Turkish authorities. He was paraded handcuffed for eight hours in the streets of Sanaa; and, after being subjected to gross indignities, was sent to Hodeidah, where he is still imprisoned.

"*** A letter recently received in London from Mr. Wavell stated that on account of the fighting between the Turks and the Arabs, he was not allowed to proceed, but was being treated in quite a friendly manner. At the time of writing he hoped soon to be able to get away."

The *Times*, July 4, 1911 :—

"BRITISH EXPLORER ARRESTED IN YEMEN

"THE TURKISH EXPLANATION

"(From our own Correspondent)

"Constantinople,
"*June* 26.

"Mr. Wavell, the British explorer, whose arrest was

recently reported in the *Times*, was handed over to H.B.M.'s Vice-Consul at Hodeida a week ago by the Ottoman authorities.

"It is only fair to give the Turkish official version of the circumstances connected with Mr. Wavell's arrest. According to Izzet Pasha, the commander of the Yemen Field Force, Mr. Wavell was at Sanaa during the blockade of that town by the insurgents. He professed to have become a Moslem and to have visited Mecca, but was given police protection until the end of the blockade. After the withdrawal of the insurgents he appears to have applied for permission to travel in the interior, but leave was refused owing to the disturbed state of the country. He then, according to Izzet Pasha, attempted to give the authorities the slip, and left the town on horseback accompanied by his servant riding upon a donkey. The animals were discovered near the town gates, and the police, imagining that Mr. Wavell had been murdered or carried off by brigands, instituted a search which resulted in the discovery of the explorer disguised as an Arab. As Mr. Wavell's baggage, which was then searched, contained, as well as his British passport, a passport wherein he was described as a subject of the Sultan of Zanzibar, named Ali, the authorities decided to send him under escort to the coast, which was done. Izzet Pasha states that Mr. Wavell was not ill-treated at all, and that his relations with the police officer who escorted him to Hodeida were most friendly, as was proved by the fact that the explorer dressed and cured an injury to that functionary's hand.

"Such is the Turkish official version of Mr. Wavell's arrest, which differs most materially from that which has been communicated from Hodeida to H.B.M.'s Embassy at Constantinople. The remarkable discrepancies between the two versions suggest the institution of an inquiry as to what actually did take place."

When I arrived in England, towards the end of the year, I endeavoured to ascertain from the Foreign Office what action had been taken in this case. I found that though His Majesty's Ambassador at Constantinople was supposed to be protesting or sending notes or doing something else severe to the Sublime Porte, they were uninformed in England as to the details. I was advised by a friend who has experience in these matters that if I wanted anything done I must exert myself and that I should do well to put in an

enormous claim for personal damages. At the Foreign Office I was asked to write a letter stating my claims and reasons for putting them forward.

The following correspondence ensued. In "fair copying" I may have slightly altered the wording of the first and fifth letters.

"*To* His Majesty's Permanent Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

"7, Egerton Gardens,
"14/11/11.

"Sir,

"I have the honour to call your attention to the recent action of the Ottoman Government with regard to myself, news of which has already been received by your department, and by His Majesty's Embassy in Constantinople. A full report concerning the ill treatment and illegal imprisonment of which I complain was to my knowledge sent by the Hodeidah Vice-Consulate to His Majesty's Embassy last June. I find however that your department is not yet in possession of the facts of the case, and that no reparation from the Ottoman Government has hitherto been obtained.

"The Vali, Mohammed Ali Pasha, who was mainly responsible, still retains his position, and nothing in the way of an apology has been received from the Porte.

"I would most respectfully venture to urge that, ordinary means having failed to secure satisfaction within a reasonable time, some forcible measures might now be adopted.

"My view is that the public beating and imprisonment without trial of British subjects, especially when one of them is an Englishman, the story of which has become very generally known throughout S.W. Arabia, is not, if allowed to pass unpunished, likely to enhance our prestige in that part of the world. This is apart from certain flagrant breaches of the capitulations and indeed of International Law, such as the action of the Turkish authorities in forcibly preventing my communicating with the British Consul when in difficulty, which I cannot think His Majesty's Government intend to pass over unnoticed: and it is in the belief that your department is unaware of the gravity of the case that I venture to protest against further ineffective action.

"I must point out that this is a *cause célèbre* in the Yemen and even in Aden, and that so far as its effect on the minds of the Arabs is concerned, unless action is taken soon by the British Government it might just as well not be taken at all.

"As regards my own personal interests I wish to claim com-

pensation to the extent of twenty thousand pounds for myself, and five thousand pounds on behalf of my servant Ahmad, also a British subject, who suffered the same ill treatment as I did.

"I am at your entire disposition to furnish any particulars you may require. Sworn statements, however, by myself and my servant, together with other evidence collected by His Majesty's Vice-Consul, are already in possession of His Majesty's Embassy.

"I have the honour to be, Sir,
"Your obedient Servant,
(Signed) "A. J. B. WAVELL."

"No. 47437/11.

"FOREIGN OFFICE,
"*December 8th*, 1911.

"SIR,

"Secretary Sir E. Grey has had under his careful consideration, in consultation with His Majesty's Ambassador at Constantinople, the circumstances of your arrest and treatment by the Turkish authorities on the occasion of your recent visit to the Yemen.

"From the terms of your affidavit of June 12, 1911, it appears that on your arrival at Hodeidah you were questioned by the Turkish authorities as to your motives in going to the country; that you were given to understand that you would not be able to go up to Sanaa for the time being; that some days later you were informed that a telegram had been received from the Vali forbidding your journey to Sanaa; and that in a final letter from the Mutassarif, which was passed on to you by His Majesty's Vice-Consul, it was intimated that, having regard to the disturbed state of the country and the insecurity of the road, the Ottoman Government did not feel justified in helping you in your plan; that, being prepared to take risks, you left Hodeidah by night in disguise; that soon after your arrival at Sanaa you were placed under increasing police supervision on the pretext of preventing your assassination; that the authorities, notwithstanding assurances to the contrary, entertained suspicions as to the motives of your visit; that, on your notifying the Vali of your intention of leaving in the direction of Aden, you were informed that he had received instructions ordering your immediate deportation; that, shortly afterwards, you managed, on pretence of taking photographs, to make your escape; that you and your servant were recaptured and, after being subjected during

your return to ill treatment, were imprisoned for some days and forcibly brought back to Hodeidah.

"You claim, as compensation for this treatment, Twenty thousand pounds for yourself and Five thousand pounds for your servant.

"The Ottoman Government, with whom His Majesty's Ambassador has been in communication, represent that you went to Sanaa in defiance of the prohibition of the authorities; that, in consequence of the political situation in the Yemen, the authorities thought it necessary to send you back to Hodeidah; that on learning of this decision you effected your escape in disguise; that none the less you were treated with consideration; and finally that you were brought back to Hodeidah.

"It thus appears, both from your own account and from that of the Turkish Government, that you left Hodeidah for the interior in spite of the express prohibition of the Turkish authorities, and that you did so clandestinely; and that, after encouraging suspicions by this action, you again attempted, on pretence of taking photographs, to evade the authorities by escaping from Sanaa.

"There is some discrepancy in the two accounts of the treatment you received; but, in view of your conduct in acting in defiance of the wishes and express injunctions of the authorities, Sir E. Grey does not feel that it would be either equitable or desirable to press your own claim or that advanced on behalf of your servant, who was of course acting under your orders, upon the Turkish Government.

"I am, Sir,
"Your most obedient, humble Servant,
"LOUIS MALLET."

"7, EGERTON GARDENS, S.W.
"18/12/11.

"The Under Secretary of State,
Foreign Office,
London.

"SIR,

"With reference to your letter 47437/11 of the eighth instant.

"I cannot help feeling that a misapprehension exists in the mind of the Foreign Secretary as to my motives for claiming redress from the Turkish Government. I obtained the best advice I could on the subject, which was to the effect that my protest should take the form of a demand for substantial damages. But, as this advice may have been mis-

taken, and as my object certainly was not merely to obtain monetary compensation, I wish entirely to withdraw all claim as regards myself, before respectfully requesting the Secretary of State to reconsider the whole matter in the case of my servant Ahmad.

"As, Sir, you are aware, various letters received from the Turkish local authorities have been passed to me for comment, and I do not think I am indiscreet in saying that I am acquainted with the general tenor of the communications that have passed between the Hodeidah Vice-Consulate and His Majesty's Ambassador on this subject. I know therefore that the truth of the statements made by Ahmad and myself in our affidavits has been vouched for by your representative on the spot, who personally examined eye-witnesses of these occurrences. I do not think therefore that the Foreign Secretary can consider our statements as absolute falsehoods, yet he prefers to accept the account of the Turkish Government. You say 'there is some discrepancy in the two accounts of the treatment you received.' I would most respectfully venture to point out that they are mutually contradictory in almost every possible particular.

"In the last paragraph but one of your letter you say that the two accounts agree that I left Hodeidah in spite of the express prohibition of the Turkish authorities. I do not admit that the intimations I received that my expedition was not viewed with favour amounted to a prohibition, but that is not the point I wish to make. If you will refer to the telegram sent by the Vali to the Vice-Consulate seven months later, on the occasion of my escape from Sanaa, you will see that he says he did not know I was a British subject! Considering that my passport was 'viséd' at Hodeidah, that the Vali himself claims to have 'prohibited' my journey on this very ground, and that various communications had passed during those months between the Vilayet and the British Vice-Consulate, this assertion is extraordinary; and I merely instance it by way of proving that other statements emanating from the same source may well be received with caution. I may add that it is quite as near the truth as most of the Vali's statements in his letter to the Vice-Consul dated 7th Tamuz, 1227.*

"In the alternative I am forced to conclude that Secretary Sir Edward Grey, while believing my statement, considers that the Turks were justified in doing as they did, and in effect endorses their action. In other words they are justified in

* Another Turkish "explanation"—quite different from Izzet Pasha's!—AUTHOR.

proceeding to almost any length with any Englishman in Turkey who has the temerity to disregard the 'wishes and express injunctions' of the local authorities. I would respectfully urge that the danger in adopting this attitude is that in consequence other British subjects will, with even less valid excuses, be arrested, beaten, or knocked about with muskets and prevented from communicating with the British representative as was the case with me. In fact in these circumstances the capitulations may tend to become a dead letter in these remote districts.

"In my letter of November 14th I ventured to draw your attention to reasons which in my opinion rendered it most undesirable that this case should be allowed to drop. I will not therefore repeat them here: but will once more urge on grounds of patriotism and public policy that some action should be taken which will convince both the Turkish authorities and the inhabitants of the Yemen that the British Government is not absolutely indifferent to the fate of their subjects or the feelings of their representative.

"I do not suggest that the Foreign Office is in any way answerable for the safety of travellers in wild countries or responsible when disaster overtakes them. This outrage (as I contend) was committed by the officers of a civilized Government in the capital of the province, and I hope that the danger of such a thing happening may not in future have to be reckoned as one of the ordinary risks of Arabian travel.

"In conclusion I would like to protest against the practice followed in this case by His Majesty's Embassy of supplying information to the press in cases where private individuals are concerned. The telegrams giving an inaccurate version of the affair which appeared in the papers both in this country and in India immediately following my arrival in Hodeidah could only have emanated from that source. They have been an annoyance to me and cannot, so far as I can see, have served any useful purpose.

"I am, Sir,

"Your most obedient, humble Servant,

"A. J. B. WAVELL."

"No. 557/12.

"FOREIGN OFFICE,

"*January* 16*th*, 1912.

"SIR,

"With reference to the letter from this Office of the 21st ultimo, and previous correspondence relative to your

recent visit to the Yemen and the consequent action of the Turkish authorities, I am directed by Secretary Sir Edward Grey to inform you that he has received a despatch from His Majesty's Ambassador at Constantinople reporting, with regard to the point raised in the last paragraph of your communication of December 18th, that your suggestion that inaccurate information respecting your case was supplied to the press by His Majesty's Embassy is founded on a misapprehension. So far as Sir G. Lowther remembers, the first news on the subject appeared in the *Times* in a form which suggested the idea that it was derived from your correspondents in this country.* When representations were first made to the Sublime Porte relative to your case, journalists at Constantinople heard of it and made inquiries at the Embassy, to which the reply was returned in general terms that it was true that there had been an incident and that, in consequence of Sir G. Lowther's representations, the Turkish Government had promised an investigation. Beyond returning such answers to inquiries no communication was made by His Majesty's Embassy to the press.

"I am also to offer the following observations on the remaining portion of your letter.

"It is stated in paragraph 2 that you wish to withdraw any claim on your own behalf and it is requested that the whole matter may be reconsidered in the case of your servant Ahmad.

"As regards this request, it is not clear to Sir E. Grey why your servant, whom you describe as 'a British subject from the Aden Protectorate' and who assisted in your escape from Sanaa, should be treated by His Majesty's Government more favourably than yourself. I am further to point out that, as the same conditions cover both claims, the withdrawal of your own would merely have the effect of weakening the case in support of that put forward by your servant.

"As regards paragraph 3 of your letter I am to state that Sir E. Grey's decision not to support your case was not exclusively based on the statements contained in the Turkish account of the affair, as may be seen from the following passage in the letter from this Office of the 8th ultimo:

"'It thus appears, both from your own account and from that of the Turkish Government, that you left Hodeidah in spite of the express prohibition of the Turkish authorities, and that you did so clandestinely; and that, after encouraging suspicions by this action, you again attempted, on pretence of taking photographs, to evade the authorities by escaping from Sanaa.'

* Compare dates.—AUTHOR.

"In paragraph 4 you say: 'I do not admit that the intimations I received that my expedition was not viewed with favour amounted to a prohibition. . . .'

"As regards this statement I am to recall your attention to the following passage in your sworn statement:

"'Some days later we were informed by the Commissaire that a telegram had been received from the Vali forbidding our journey to Sanaa.' That the telegram from the Vali here referred to was not the first intimation of the kind that had reached you is proved by your admission (in the same sworn statement) that the Commissaire at Hodeidah told you on your arrival there that, as a foreign subject, you could not go up to Sanaa for the present.

"Sir E. Grey fails to see how, short of the use of actual force, a more explicit prohibition could have been formulated, but in spite of this, and of the failure of His Majesty's Vice-Consul to obtain permission for you to go, you decided to undertake the journey, which was therefore made entirely at your own risk.

"As regards the reflections cast, in the same paragraph, on the veracity of the Vali, I am to state that Sir E. Grey has no desire to champion the cause of that official, whose account of the case may well have been inaccurate in some respects, but his denial of knowledge that you were a British subject, though possibly disingenuous, may be explained by the fact that you had in your possession a Turkish passport which he may have considered himself entitled to regard as possessing as good a claim as your British one to be taken into account as evidence of your true nationality.

"As regards paragraphs 5, 6, and 7 of your letter, your defiance of the orders of the authorities, first at Hodeidah and later at Sanaa, afforded some justification for the maintenance of a strict watch on your proceedings and, in spite of your assurances, for some suspicion of your intentions.

"In Sir E. Grey's opinion, your own conduct led to the treatment which you received, and he cannot therefore see his way to make any further representations to the Turkish Government on your behalf. His Majesty's Government would be adopting an untenable position were they to enter protests or make claims for compensation in cases where irresponsible British subjects, disregarding the wishes and orders of the local authorities, undertake surreptitious journeys in districts where the suppression of rebellions is in progress.

"I am, Sir,

"Your most obedient, humble Servant,

"EYRE A. CROWE."

"Villa Stella Maris, Biarritz, France.
"*January* 21*st*, 1912.

"The Under Secretary of State,
"Foreign Office,
"London.

"Sir,

"In reply to your letter 557/12 of the 16th instant.

"With reference to the first paragraph I would state that the first news on the subject appeared in the *Times* of June 16th —only a very short time after the Consul's report therein alluded to could have reached His Majesty's Embassy. I can assure the Foreign Secretary that the information was not furnished by me, and it could not have been derived from any correspondent of mine, because no one in England was aware, at that date, of the nature of the occurrence. It seemed so very unlikely that the version of the incident first given could have emanated from any Turkish official source, that I was driven to conclude that His Majesty's Ambassador himself must have communicated it.

"Since, however, you inform me that this is not the case it only remains for me to express my regret for having made this suggestion.

"As regards the third and fourth paragraphs of your letter I must explain that I ventured to request that the case of my servant Ahmad should be reconsidered because I am acting practically as his agent in the matter, and am therefore bound to press, to the best of my ability, any just claim for pecuniary compensation he may have. May I further observe that I have been claiming on both his and my own behalf what I had believed was a right shared by 'British subjects from the Aden Protectorate' equally with those from other parts of His Majesty's dominions.

"The passage from my sworn statement quoted in your letter requires its context. The information in question was conveyed to us verbally by the Commissaire. You will observe that in the subsequent official correspondence between His Majesty's Vice-Consulate and the local authorities there is no question of prohibition. You allude to the failure of His Majesty's Vice-Consul to obtain permission for me to go. May I point out that he never asked for such permission because he did not admit that any permission was required? Perhaps I may be pardoned for having preferred to be guided in my actions by this rather than by a casual statement made by a minor official. Without wishing to unduly elaborate this point I should like to observe that His Majesty's Vice-Consulate was actually in communication with the local

authorities at the time, and that it is curious, to say the least of it, that the Vice-Consul should not have been informed of the receipt of such a telegram from the Vali at the time.

"The Vali's reputation for veracity cannot be defended in the manner suggested by Sir Edward Grey. His Excellency stated that 'he did not know I was a British subject' in a telegram to the Vice-Consulate sent on the 11th Mais, on which date he was unaware of the existence of my 'Turkish' passport. That document did not fall into his hands till twenty-four hours later, as may be seen by comparing the two telegrams. I cannot see that in any case it would have justified him in doubting my nationality unless, indeed, he does not know that Zanzibar is a British protectorate. As you are doubtless aware the Ottoman Government is, or was, in the habit of issuing passports to intending pilgrims of other than Ottoman nationality.

"In the last paragraph but one you say 'As regards paragraphs 5, 6, and 7 of your letter your defiance of the authorities first at Hodeidah and later at Sanaa afforded some justification for the maintenance of a strict watch on your proceedings and, in spite of your assurances, for some suspicion of your intentions.' In the paragraph 5, here alluded to, I urged that the 'danger in adopting this attitude is that in consequence other British subjects will with even less valid excuses be arrested, beaten, or knocked about with muskets and prevented from communicating with the British representative as was the case with me.' Such treatment does not seem to me compatible with even the strictest surveillance. As regards the suspicions entertained by the authorities, it is only unofficially that I have been informed of their nature. They amounted apparently to a belief that I was engaged in espionage on behalf of the British Government. I absolutely deny that I ever did or said anything that could possibly lend colour to this extraordinary idea.

"May I venture to point out that if the Turkish authorities rightly disapproved of my presence in the Yemen, they had a simple remedy at their disposal? They had merely to apply to His Majesty's Embassy to order my return, or if necessary to authorize my deportation. None the less, throughout the six months I spent in Sanaa, during part of which time I was in frequent communication with His Majesty's representative in the country, I received no intimation whatever that my presence there was so distasteful to the British Government that they proposed to deny me the right to claim reparation for injury ordinarily accorded to British subjects in Turkey and elsewhere.

"Sir Edward Grey considers that my own conduct led to the treatment I received. In my opinion this conduct was justified by the illegal and violent action of the Vali in threatening to deport me without the authorization of His Majesty's representative and in stopping my communication to the latter. In any case, whether justified or not in attempting to escape, no excuse can be made for the proceedings which followed our recapture.

"As regards the last paragraph of your letter I must again point out that the suppression of a rebellion was not in progress when I undertook the journey. I do not admit that what I have done justified the epithet 'irresponsible' nor do I see how a journey which has been the subject of constant official correspondence from its outset can properly be described as surreptitious.

"I shall communicate the Foreign Secretary's decision to the other British subject concerned, and Sir,

"I have the honour to be,

"Your most obedient, humble Servant,

"A. J. B. Wavell."

The reader of course will form his own opinion. Mine is that the first letter would have better expressed the true state of the case had it begun somewhat in this way:

"Sir,

"Sir Edward Grey and His Majesty's Ambassador at Constantinople have been putting their heads together to find an excuse for not interfering in your case, because it would be very inconvenient to do so. The following is not very good, but it is the best they can do. We hope that it may prove to be out of your power to make much fuss about it—*et seq.*"

I believe that by taking the side of the Turks in this case the Foreign Secretary is making a mistake. I do not doubt he thinks he is serving the best interest of the country by declining to take action, and the public may agree with him. We shall see.

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PRINTED BY
HAZELL, WATSON AND VINEY, LD.
LONDON AND AYLESBURY.